

# WITCHCRAFT: FACT AND FANTASY

Rod Serling's

June 1987

# THE TWILIGHT ZONE Magazine

**CLIVE  
BARKER**  
STORY AND  
INTERVIEW

**THE WITCHES  
OF EASTWICK**  
FILM PREVIEW  
PLUS  
FICTION BY  
**JOHN  
UPDIKE**

**FANTASTIC  
FICTION**  
**LUCIUS SHEPARD**  
**JANE YOLEN**  
**MICHAEL McDOWELL**  
**PAT CADIGAN**  
**RICHARD PAUL RUSSO**



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# IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Bewitched, Bothered  
and Bewildered.



Lucius Shepard



John Updike

Things seem to have come in threes this issue. Almost everything associated with it (including the three butterflies on the cover) has had something to do with the number three. We're not sure what it's all about, but it's resulted in an intriguing and, we hope, enjoyable mix.

For example, our color section this issue concerns two trios of contemporary witches—the three fictional witches of John Updike's bestselling novel *The Witches of Eastwick*, which has just been adapted into a multi-million-dollar feature film, and the very real Laurie Cabot, who, with her two witch-daughters, practices magic in the unlikely locale of Salem, Massachusetts. Contributing Editor James Verniere introduces us to both in an exclusive film preview and a provocative interview.

## Matters of Faith

Our third feature (see?) this month is an interview with rising horror star Clive Barker, conducted by Douglas E. Winter, who profiled Charles L. Grant here in April. Last issue we stated here that Doug's newest work of nonfiction was titled *Art of Darkness: The Films of Stephen King*. We were mistaken. Winter's latest work is *Faces of Fear* (Berkley), which contains a much longer interview with Barker for those who find him as fascinating a personality as we do. The earlier work, recently reissued by NAL, is actually titled *Stephen King: The Art of Darkness*. It is a biographical and critical work that deliberately excludes

all of King's films except those he produced or directed himself.

We also discovered, while putting this issue together, that three of our lead stories concern matters of faith, salvation and sin. Barker's own story, "Down, Satan!" is about a man who courts the Devil to find God. John Updike's "Jesus on Honshu" is a strange and lyrical fable about a legend that Christ spent his last years in Japan. And Lucius Shepard's "The Exercise of Faith" tells of a minister driven to evil by the darkness in his soul.

John Updike needs little introduction. One of America's most respected writers, he frequently contributes fiction and criticism to *The New Yorker*. His most recent works include *Facing Nature*, a collection of poetry, *Hugging the Shore*, a volume of essays, and *Roger's Version*, a novel. All are published by Alfred A. Knopf.

Lucius Shepard is one of the most heralded new SF talents of recent years. His first novel, *Green Eyes*, was published as part of Terry Carr's acclaimed new Ace Science Fiction Specials, and he has garnered a host of nominations for every major award in the field. At this writing his novella "R&R" is a strong contender to win this year's Nebula Award, and a novel developed from it, *Life During Wartime*, will be published as a Bantam hardcover later this year.

## Creatures of the Deep

Three stories this issue, also by sheer coincidence, deal with malevolent creatures. Jane Yolen's "Wolf/Child" is a

chilling, Kiplingesque story set in the sunset of the British Raj. Chet Williamson's "Ants" is the ultimate tale of insectoid revenge. And Paul Walton's "Grass Shark" is an indescribable bit of whimsy about aquatic predators in the Deep South.

Author of over one hundred books, most for young people, Jane Yolen is now gaining an equally distinguished reputation as an author of adult fantasy with novels such as *Merlin's Book* (Ace Books). She is the editor of several anthologies, including *Dragons and Dreams* and *Favorite Folktales from Around the World* (Pantheon). Yolen has reviewed children's books for *The New York Times Book Review* and was recently elected President of the Science Fiction Writers of America.

Chet Williamson, who appeared most recently in these pages with "I'll Drown My Book," (August, 1986) is the author of *Soulstorm* and *Ash Wednesday*, just published in hardcover by Tor Books.

"Grass Shark" is Paul Walton's first published story, although he's been writing seriously for over ten years. Born in Jacksonville, North Carolina, he's lived with his family in Oaktown, Virginia, for the past fifteen years or so. Aside from writing, his first love is flying small planes. He's currently at work on a novel.

## Still Waters

Our three remaining tales this issue are all filled with images of water. Richard Paul Russo's "Dead Man on the Beach"



Michael McDowell



Jane Yolen

is a haunting, mysterious story of a body that wasn't there. Michael McDowell's "Halley's Passing" is one of the few stories we've read recently that brings new life (as it were) to an old legend. And Pat Cadigan's "The Boys in the Rain" is about a lost woman lured away by a strange and misty magic.

A graduate of the 1983 Clarion writing workshop, Richard Paul Russo has published a half dozen stories in publications including *Asimov's SF*, *F&SF*, and the Vietnam anthology *In the Field of Fire*. His first novel, *Inner Eclipse*, will be out later this year from Tor Books.

Michael McDowell is the author of more than thirty books, including *The Amulet*, *Cold Moon Over Babylon*, and the serial novel *Blackwater*, published in six volumes in 1983. He has written over a dozen television scripts, including several episodes of *Tales from the Darkside*, and his first feature film, *Beetle Juice*, will be released by Geffen Pictures and Warner Brothers next year. McDowell writes that his hobbies include collecting eighteenth and nineteenth century death memorabilia, and photographs of corpses, criminals, and atrocities.

Pat Cadigan, on the other hand, leads a relatively normal life (at least on sunny days). She and her husband live near Kansas City with their son Bobby Mike (aka "Bobzilla"), where she's worked for Hallmark Cards for the last ten years. Cadigan has been published in most of the leading sf and fantasy magazines and antholo-



Pat Cadigan



Richard Paul Russo

gies, including *Omni*, *Shadows*, and *F&SF*, and most recently in *Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology* (Arbor House). Her first novel, *Mindplayers*, will be published by Bantam Spectra this fall.

As an added bonus this issue, we've included not three but six columns. Gahan Wilson's Screen column casts a skeptical eye on the latest fantasy blockbusters. Our anonymous Tinseltown tipster provides late-breaking news on the rapidly changing world of film and television in Hollywood Grapevine. And Christopher Karwowski's Music column covers the sounds some call "Space Music," "Meditation Music," or simply "New Age."

Finally, two columns focus on the work of filmmaker George Romero. Video columnist Welch D. Everman surveys the films inspired by his classic "Zombie Trilogy" in a column titled "Romero's Children." And Robin Bromley's Television column includes a rare interview with the man Romero hired to be his boss, Laurel Entertainment's dynamic Executive Producer Richard Rubinstein.

And, as usual, you'll find our own unique mix of the unusual, the innovative and the bizarre in our Illuminations and Other Side sections. We hope you'll find it all to your liking, and filled with enough special magic to prove that old saying that good things come in threes. Thanks again for joining us, and, until the next time, enjoy!

-TWK

# Rod Serling's THE TWILIGHT ZONE Magazine

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# BOOKS

by Edward Bryant

*Mary and the Giant* by Philip K. Dick  
*Lincoln's Dreams* by Connie Willis  
*Excavation* by Steve Rasnic Tem  
*Live Girls* by Ray Garton  
*Darkside* by Dennis Etchison  
*Talking Man* by Terry Bisson  
*Arslan* by M.J. Engh  
*Northshore* by Sheri S. Tepper  
*Nebula Awards 21* edited by George Zebrowski  
*Mirrorshades—The Cyberpunk*  
Anthology edited by Bruce Sterling  
*In the Field of Fire* edited by Jeanne Van Buren Dann and Jack Dann

*The Hercules Text* by Jack McDevitt  
*The Eyes of the Dragon* by Stephen King  
*Unholy Trinity* by Robert Bloch  
*The Outer Limits—The Official Companion* by David J. Schow  
*Tweedlioop* by Stanley Schmidt  
*Two Songs This Archangel Sings* by George C. Chesbro  
*Veil* by George C. Chesbro  
*Dome* by Michael Reaves and Steve Perry  
*Wild Cards II: Aces High* edited by George R.R. Martin

The 1953 setting, to a certain degree, appears quaint to us now. But the treatment of race and gender relationships, the candid sexual descriptions, are all fresh and appropriate for the '80s, and astonishing when one realizes they were composed three and a half decades ago.

I enjoyed *Mary and the Giant* very much. My only negative reaction was the sadness at realizing what could have been; and wondering whether this novel became Philip K. Dick's first major literary splash in that parallel world. The editors who, in this world, turned down *Mary and the Giant* back in the 'fifties have much to account for.

This spring sees Connie Willis's first solo novel. It is *Lincoln's Dreams* (Bantam Spectra, 224 pp., ISBN 0-553-05179-0, \$15.95). It wasn't what I was expecting. That is, of course, not a value judgement. *Lincoln's Dreams* is a tight, solid, fantasy with a stiletto-in-the-heart epiphany at the end. I have the feeling the book is structured like a good stage play, with a limited cast and not a whole lot of exterior sets. Willis constructs a circumscribed, internalized world here, where dialogue carries the plot far more than either action or even character.

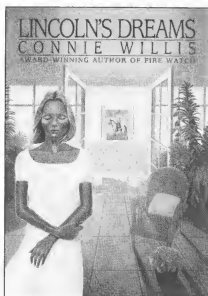
Willis loves historical research, and *Lincoln's Dreams* contains ample (though never intrusive) evidence. In many respects the book is a Civil War novel, though it's set in the present day. It revolves around Annie, a young woman bedeviled by troubling dreams that may—or may not—be those of Robert E. Lee. The narrator is Jeff Johnston, intuitive and bookish assistant to a best selling novelist named Broun. Jeff's college roommate is a shrink who is treating Annie for her nightmares.

What follows is a psychological

There must be a parallel universe in which Philip K. Dick not only is still alive, but also has become a major writer claimed by no specific genre. In this other world, his novels, including the ones generally accorded to be science fiction, are read and enjoyed by a broad cross-section of readers. The real launching point of this remarkable career was the 1954 publication of *Mary and the Giant*.

In the world in which I write and you read this, nothing like that happened. *Mary and the Giant*, a definitely non-science fiction novel, was never published in 1954. Reading it, one can suspect why. It has taken until now, after Philip K. Dick's death and the dedicated attempts of his friends and admirers to publish his non-genre work, for the book to appear.

I admit I haven't liked all the PKD novels taken from the vault, dusted off, and published posthumously. But *Mary and the Giant* (Arbor House, 209 pp., ISBN 0-87795-850-5, \$15.95) is worth the effort. This is the story of Joseph Schilling, the record-shop entrepreneur who settles down in a little town fifty miles from San Francisco. It is the tale of Carleton Tweany, the Paul Robeson-like blues singer, and of Paul Nitz, the cynical



white piano player. Most of all, it is the life of Mary Anne Reynolds, the young, confused, striving, prickly, endearing twenty-year-old who represents one of Dick's very few attempts to portray a female protagonist. He carries it off so adroitly one must wonder why he didn't attempt it again until his last novel.

and historical mystery (exactly *whose* dreams afflict Annie, and where are they originating?) with enough painless Jungian speculation to keep a legion of Kate Wilhelm fans happy. It's fascinating and, finally, deeply affecting.

Maybe *that's* what I should have expected all along from the author's solo debut as a novelist.

Steve Rasnic Tem is a scary guy, his mild manner and slow, Virginia way of talking notwithstanding. He is a writer who combines a poet's precision of language with an abnormal psychologist's insightful grasp of just what kinks and terrors make most of us squirm. His way is not to make us jump from our chairs with cheap monster-in-the-closet scare tactics, but rather to have us speculate about, say, what our teeth are doing of their own volition to the soft places of our mouths while we're sleeping away.

In only about six years, Tem has come to rival Dennis Etchison and Ramsey Campbell as a master of the psychological horror story, publishing well over one hundred pieces. Now his

first novel has appeared. It's *Excavation* (Avon, 280 pp., ISBN 0-380-75173-9, \$3.50). The novel's primary strength is that it's about the sense of *place*, taking the stance that physical landscapes inexorably work on the psychological landscapes of characters. *Excavation* is also about strata, the layering of people and location, and the peeling back of those layers that allows one to recapture some bit of the past. It's about the bonds between parents and children, especially father and son.

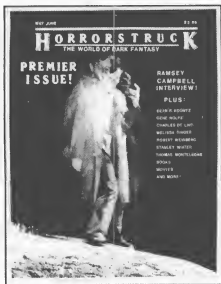
But mainly, *Excavation* is concerned with the sense of place of locations and the *genius loci*, the spirit that inhabits those places. In the novel, archaeologist Reed Taylor returns to his Kentucky homeland. Years before, the rest of his family was killed when a coal company's slipshod waste dam gave way and devastated an entire hollow. Reed leaves his wife and children, all his new life behind, and returns to the place of his rearing to—literally—dig up the past.

There's a little of Stephen King here; a little more of Charles L.

Grant; but mainly what there is, is a lot of Steve Rasnic Tem. *Excavation* beats out at least ninety percent of the book-length fiction I've read the past year. Tem's extraordinary skill with words and images, as well as his tendency to write about the human qualities that really count, make this first novel a publishing event worth noting. It's more than enough to make one look forward to Tem's next novel-length outing.

Here's another good novel by a fairly recent writer. It's a book that will certainly offend some readers, but delight most. It's Ray Garton's *Live Girls* (Pocket Books, 311 pp., ISBN 0-671-62628-0, \$3.95). *Live Girls* fits into the canon of contemporary vampire novels already staked out by *The Light at the End*, *Vampire Junction*, *They Thirst* and *Salem's Lot*. It's a circus of blood, action and amusing bits, all underlaid with enough provoked thought and character twists to keep the astute reader from feeling too guilty for reading it.

Just think. What if some of the peep-show booths at a particularly



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leazy Times Square porno joint were womaned by vampires obtaining blood through oral sex with their male customers? It's probably a bit more blatant than anything M. R. James would spring at, but that's okay. Readers who persevere will also have to negotiate torrents of erotic vampiric encounters with menstrual blood. Blood and sex are inextricably combined in this book. And done so with considerable flash and wit.

Ray Garton's good, no question about it. The first half of *Live Girls* poses an artistic risk. The book reads like any number of dull, banal, very basic potboilers. Everything seems utterly predictable. It is, of course, a setup. The second half starts taking devious twists that should amaze and amuse even the most jaded literary hemophile. I was delighted that the protagonists underwent real character changes, and ended up nowhere near what I imagined their destinations would be. I wish Garton had included more gritty street-setting in the Times Square sequences, but that's probably only my desire to gild the lily. As it is, he's created a horror novel worth, um, biting into immediately.

It should be noted that Dennis Etchison has published his first novel under his own name. It's *Darkside* (Charter, 246 pp., ISBN 0-441-13819-5, \$3.50). *Darkside* depicts the Southern California that Etchison knows so well, and which you non-Californians have always suspected is the way things really are in Lotus Land.

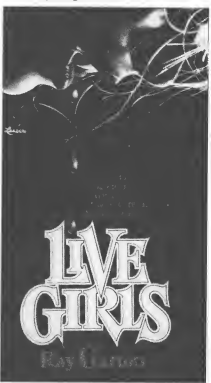
The author sets up a pleasant upper-middle-class family that's just moved into the neighborhood. It's a neighborhood where some adolescents are disappearing; others are outright dying mysteriously. Adult, teenager or child, everyone in the family gets slowly sucked into the ghastly morass that has something to do with a place called the Darkside and the shadowy group called the Lost Ones.

The family members all have realistically abrasive personalities. Etchison does very well at building up an uneasy, doom-fraught tone. I think the plot suffers just a bit because of an emphasis on style. Frankly I'm not sure if I understood everything that eventually happened in the book.

But I do know that what I did understand was executed in a moving, melancholic, bittersweet way. *Darkside* is not a simple escape. It's a horror novel about something all-too-real and truly horrifying—teenage suicide. That's the heart. And Etchison's ability

is to make that heart beat in a resonance that will first make edgy, and then trigger other, less predictable effects on the reader.

Don't pass up a new fantasy novel called *Talking Man* by Terry Bisson (Arbor House, 192 pp., ISBN 0-87795-813-0, \$14.95). I'm not sure when the last time might be that I read anything like this book. Bisson's



fashioned an extended tall tale about the final conflict between the Talking Man, who is dreaming the world which is our reality, and his cosmic counterpart who would wake him.

The book focuses on the adventures of Talking Man's daughter Crystal, when she enlists the aid of a young man named Williams to travel off across an America of rather unstable reality to find her missing father. Bisson, a Kentuckian, is another master of utilizing his sense of place. The portions of the American phantasmagoria he chooses to illustrate become intensely real, even as the tone of the novel falls farther and deeper into a state of dream. I have to admit to being delighted by a book that so adroitly drew me into its hypnogogic state with such elements as a '62 Chrysler, the John Deere tractors of my childhood, Mason jars, wizards at the end of time, and a flatly incredible auto journey across the Mississippi Canyon (you did notice it the last time you drove to St. Louis, didn't you?).

I admit not to having read Bisson's first novel *Wyrldmaker*, a paperback original published several years ago. I think I'll remedy that oversight on my part.

A book which I read ten years ago when it first appeared as a paperback original has hung in my mind, and apparently the minds of others as well. Now it's back with a chance for permanence. I'm referring to M.J. Engh's *Arslan* (Arbor House, 274 pp., ISBN 0-87795-884-X, \$16.95). *Arslan* is partly allegory, partly an astute dissection of authoritarian politics. In the book, the small town of Kraftsville, Illinois, becomes a microcosm for an America conquered and occupied by a new world order. High school principal Franklin Bond becomes the community's point of contact with the invading Turkistani general, Arslan. It's a rather more realistic fashion than, say, *Red Dawn*. Engh's book shows us what happens next.

*Arslan* has raised a bit of controversy, and apparently no little reader-upset, by a few moments of calculated brutality. I've known at least two adult, sophisticated professional writers who claim they stopped dead in their reading of *Arslan* when they reached the section in which the general, in order to give Kraftsville a lesson, rapes both a young boy and a girl on the school auditorium stage in front of the assembled community. The act is not described sensationally. Perhaps some of the reader upset may be because the event is so matter-of-fact. M. J. Engh knows this is the sort of thing occupiers do to make sure the lesson of submission is not lost upon the conquered populace.

At any rate, *Arslan* is astute and uncompromising. It deserves a permanent edition on acid-free paper. It also deserves to return after a decade to haunt readers' dreams and stimulate their conversations.

Sheri S. Pepper continues her march toward recognition as one of our best fantasists. After thirteen paperback originals, Tor is now publishing her first hardback novel. Part of it is called *Northshore* (Tor Books, 252 pp., ISBN 0-312-93006-2, \$14.95). The other part is *Southshore*, and I hope it'll be published not more than a month or two after the first volume. This is not a series. It is a two-volume novel called *The Awakeners*. Until the second volume comes out, I won't say anything about this novel except that it is a fine piece of work—and you should make sure you patiently buy *Northshore* and keep it around until

the companion half comes along, lest you be left in the lurch, unable to find Volume I later. Reading a good book can sometimes be so complicated ...

Much like eggs, potatoes, and chicken, anthologies continue to be one of the consumer's best bargains. One standard best-buy for both readers and libraries is the annual Nebula Awards anthology. The latest volume is *Nebula Awards 21*, edited by George Zebrowski (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 334 pp., tr. \$8.95, ISBN 0-15-665478-4, hc. \$19.95, ISBN 0-15-164928-6). It contains stories which the Science Fiction Writers of America have deemed the best of 1985, including Nebula Award winners "Out of All Them Bright Stars" by Nancy Kress, "Sailing to Byzantium" by Robert Silverberg, and "Portraits of His Children" by George R.R. Martin. Also included are such runners-up as 1985 novel-winner Orson Scott Card's "The Fringe," Howard Waldrop's uniquely nostalgic "Heirs of the Perisphere," and James Blaylock's gorgeously weird "Paper Dragons." SFWA continues its laudable tradition

of printing the Rhysling Award winners in the volume, first-rate poetry chosen by the members of the Science Fiction Poetry Association. Bruce Boston and Siv Cedering get the nod for the year. Though the book supplements the fiction with retrospective articles galore, I suspect my favorite piece was Bill Warren's long survey of science fiction films in 1985. The essay is entertaining, level-headed, and informative. While such an article is absolutely appropriate to the premise of the anthology, it does ironically point up SFWA's controversial elimination of the drama Nebula at roughly the same time that a substantial flow of worthwhile SF and fantasy film and video started emanating from Hollywood and other film capitals.

There are two collections absolutely worth acquiring, even if their respective executions don't completely measure up to all prior expectations. Bruce Sterling's *Mirrorshades—The Cyberpunk Anthology* (Arbor House, 239 pp., ISBN 0-87795-868-8, \$16.95) is, of course, terribly topical. This anthology collects a dozen examples of

the sf/literary movement so many of us have tried to deny, boost, or define in myriad convention panels. (My latest hypothesis is that cyberpunk writing shares two salient characteristics of speed freakdom: accelerated time-sense and paranoia.) The table of contents is representative enough (Gibson, Rucker, Shiner, Madox, Laidlaw, etc.), but there seems an arbitrariness to the selection that invites most informed readers to make up their own suggested list immediately. Pat Cadigan's "Rock On" is a high point, as is "Freezone," a clip from John Shirley's novel, *Eclipse*. Greg Bear's "Petra" is a fine story, but seemingly inappropriate to the premise of the anthology. The greatest lack would seem to be the editor's gloss of literary history undergirding the Cyberpunk Movement. The past is given mightily short shrift here. But perhaps mine is only the reactionary maundering of an obsolete fuddy-duddy.

Other cultural icons are treated in *In the Field of Fire* edited by Jeanne Van Buren Dann and Jack Dann (Tor, 416 pp., tr. \$8.95, ISBN 0-312-

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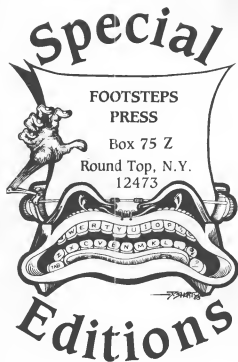
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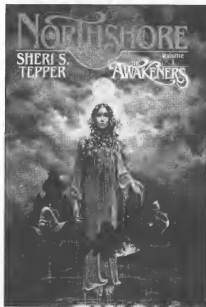


93008-9, hc \$17.95, ISBN 0-312-93000-3). Though Tor's advertising states this is an all-original anthology, there are several reprints, including stories by Harlan Ellison, Kate Wilhelm, Dennis Etchison, Lewis Shiner, and Gardner Dozois. They're all good pieces, to be sure, but they have seen print before. It's about time the trauma of Viet Nam was examined in a (largely) original anthology. *In the Field of Fire* is steeped in sincerity and social concern. Though my sympathies lie fully with the book, I found my appreciation somewhat diminished—by what, I'm not completely certain. There seemed to be a fine edge missing. Perhaps my confusion may be a tribute to one clear aim of the anthology—to harass and chivvy the reader until he or she thinks about the appropriate issues. So while I do see many reasons to commend *In the Field of Fire*, I also must feel that this book is a long way from asking the final questions and posing the final answers. I hope very much that the sales figures will encourage the publisher and editors to assemble a companion volume. Regardless of my mixed reaction, *In the Field of Fire*, is worth any ten or twelve blasters-and-space-privateers or elf-and-dragon novels. Now that I think about it, maybe I'm still so blown away by Oliver Stone's *Platoon*, other artful treatments of the Viet Nam War seem pale in comparison.

The newest Ace Science Fiction Special is out. To kick off the latest series, editor Terry Carr picked Jack McDevitt's *The Hercules Text* (Ace, 307 pp., ISBN 0-441-37367-4, \$3.50). This is effectively a hard-science novel, but the humanized sort with which Gregory Benford and Paul Preuss have done wonders. The book deals with Goddard Space Center's reception, a few years down the road, of a series of radio messages originating millions of light years away. Aside from informing our world that intelligence has existed elsewhere in the universe, the messages give researchers a cornucopia (or more properly, a Pandora's box) of advanced scientific knowledge. This leads to the crux of the novel: Is handing over to any government the ability to warp the very fabric of space, to create black holes, to perform other technological miracles, the equivalent of giving a loaded Uzi to a young and not-terribly-bright child? McDevitt's conclusion is sufficiently sober, though there's enough compromise to offer some solace to the scientific-progress-

at-any-price fringe.

*The Hercules Text* is not a bad novel, though it's unlikely to win best-of-show for its year. It is solid, competent, and occasionally rises to points of thoughtful conjecture that might galvanize the reader's gray matter. Admittedly, the one controversy I've already heard readers discussing in regard to this book is the matter of the



laserdiscs which serve as storage in the novel's advanced optical computers. There seems to be some confusion in reader minds, since McDevitt's laserdiscs can be wiped by magnetism, and contemporary laserdiscs (what you play on your expensive music system) cannot. Speaking of computers, here's one more note. I suspect *The Hercules Text* illustrates the major problem with spell-checking programs. Characters in the book, on several occasions, chow down on "cinnamon roles." Where were the human proofreaders? Apparently dicking their cinnamon roles in their coffee and trusting the computer. Tsk, tsk.

Good news for Stephen King readers is the reprinting in a trade edition of *The Eyes of the Dragon* (Viking, 326 pp., ISBN 0-670-81458-X, \$18.95). Until now, the only way to read the this novel was to acquire the Philtrum Press deluxe edition—the 1,000 copies of that, however, sell these days for upwards of \$750. Good luck finding a copy remaindered at B. Dalton.

At only 326 pages, *The Eyes of the Dragon* seems a mere slip of a thing—at least compared to *The Talisman* or *IT*. But then it's intended

to be a bedtime story, and a nifty one at that. It can be appreciated by all ages of readers, especially those still sewing and harvesting by a schedule established by marking their progress through the last two King extravaganzas.

Heroes, dragons, wizards, fiends, they're all here. Even Flagg, the nasty walkin' dude from *The Stand*, is on hand. The book is well-illustrated by David Palladini, though I admit to being partial to Kenneth R. Linkhauser's great drawings in the Philtrum edition. As far as I'm concerned, this fantasy is the same sort of change-of-pace (though far different in subject matter) that I admired when Stephen King published *Different Seasons*. Recommended.

One of King's most illustrious predecessors has a new book out—sort of. The schedule-plagued, but still splendid Scream Press has published Robert Bloch's *Unholy Trinity* (Scream/Press 350 pp., ISBN 0-910489-09-02, \$30.00). This omnibus of three earlier Bloch horrific suspense novels has a hefty price—but then it's Scream's customary superb job of bookmaking. Included are *The Scarf* (1947), *The Dead Beat* (1959) and *The Couch* (1962). Bloch has wisely opted not to "modernize" the novels (although he has restored a Charles Whitmanesque sniping fantasy once editorially snipped from *The Scarf*). In all three of these chilly tales, he shows he knows his sociopaths.

Particular note should be made of New Mexico artist Harry O. Morris's photo-collage title illustrations. If Morris didn't actually teach J.K. Potter everything the man knows, Harry certainly predates the latter's work. Morris is one of the best contemporary artists of the macabre.

A fine book for browsing is David J. Schow's (with Jeffrey Frantzen) *The Outer Limits—The Official Companion* (Ace, 406 pp., ISBN 0-441-37081-0, \$8.95). Not too surprisingly, this is the definitive book about the eponymous TV series. It's got everything: plot synopses, commentary, photos, credits, index. David Schow is both witty and incisive in his estimations of the programs. This belongs on the reference shelf of everyone with an interest in sf video.

*Tweedloop* (Tor, 233 pp., ISBN 0-312-94442-X, \$8.95) isn't just a lyric from "Rockin' Robin." It's also the title of Stanley Schmidt's new novel. Packaged to look and sound much like a copy of ET, the comparison is unfair. *Tweedloop* is a rather more intelligent and less soppy tale of a

young extraterrestrial marooned on Earth. Of course it could become a Steven Spielberg movie...

*Tweliioop* is one of the first of the Jim Frenkel-produced books to be published under another's imprint after the sad demise of Bluejay Books. I'm delighted that Bluejay's pending projects will mostly all see print from the onetime competition, though there's a certain melancholy attached to seeing different publishers' emblems on announced Bluejay packages. It was not a pleasant thing to witness a certain smirking satisfaction at Bluejay's end from a few colleagues. Indeed, the line did have its problems and afforded countless irritations to a variety of its writers. But at the same time, Jim Frenkel deserves a goddamn medal for hanging in there for years, publishing scores of good books, and for taking courageous chances on such less-than-sure bets as Jack Dann's *The Man Who Melted*, Kelly and Kessel's *Freedom Beach*, *Fire Watch* by Connie Willis, *Song of Kali* by Dan Simmons, John Shirley's *Eclipse*, Patti Perret's *Faces of Science Fiction*, and many, many more. It was a brave experiment. Fortunately this is not the obituary it's starting to resemble. Jim Frenkel will continue to edit; indeed, is already doing so for other imprints. At any rate, three cheers. And regrets.

There's a novelist that most of readers would love if they only read him; but since his work appears outside the field, his chances of winning a Hugo aren't bloody likely. His name is George C. Chesbro, his work appears under either the mystery or the suspense rubric. Most of his novels feature a dwarf criminologist (and former circus performer) named Robert Frederickson, also known as Mongo the Magnificent. Chesbro always plays Mongo straight. He does a good job of showing us the world from a dwarf's perspective.

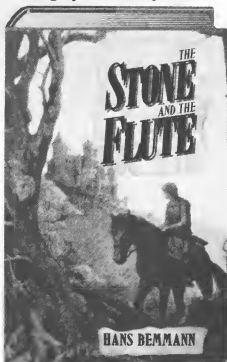
But Chesbro's plots... His novels are marvels of invention, particularly since they're presented as straight-forward detective thrillers. They're something more. 1985's *The Beasts of Valhalla* is a whacked-out play-off of Dr. Moreau. The earlier *Shadow of a Broken Man* and *An Affair of Sorcerers* casually intertwine their suspense plots with telepathy and magic. Chesbro's use of elements of the fantastic in his novels is completely casual. Even ingenuous. Not to mention ingenious. I go into this historical background in order to backstop my observation that the man's got three books out in the

stores. The very latest is *Two Songs This Archangel Sings* (Atheneum, 249 pp., ISBN 0-689-11659-4, \$14.95). Frankly, the fantasy element here is nearly nonexistent. But the book also serves as a crossover work, linking Mongo with Veil Kendry, the protagonist of the recent *Veil* (Mysterious Press, 228 pp., ISBN 0-89296-159-7, \$16.95). Veil is an artist and one-time CIA operative, for whom something akin to the Aboriginal Dreamtime is a functional part of his reality. Chesbro's third new book is the novelization of the Eddie Murphy

vehicle, *The Golden Child* (Pocket, 221 pp., ISBN 0-671-63039-3, \$3.95). I'm not going to claim that this is one of the season's literary highlights. After all, it's based on a lamely executed movie that made *Big Trouble in Little China* look like *Citizen Kane* with laughs. Yet Chesbro is a professional who tries to make his piecework just as entertaining as he possibly can. Thus he joins the pantheon of literate (or even literary) writers such as William Kotzwinkle, Thomas M. Disch, and Joyce Thompson  
(continued on page 86)

## A power greater than any weapon... for the one man with the courage to wield it.

He was the son of a bold chieftain, but he had little appetite for mighty deeds. They called him Listener—and sent him



out into the world alone. He would soon taste love and power. He would suffer pain and fear. But through it all he would seek to penetrate the secrets of the stone and the flute—and come to possess a power greater than life itself...

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# SCREEN

by Gahan Wilson

*In which our intrepid reviewer discusses the darker side of "light entertainment."*

*Star Trek IV* (Paramount)  
*The Golden Child* (Paramount)  
*King Kong Lives* (DEG)  
*Little Shop of Horrors* (Ceffen Films)

It's cotton candy time with a vengeance, readers! Hollywood's makers and shakers are giving new meaning and profundity to the expression "light entertainment," and that makes it tough on film reviewers because it's getting harder and harder to remember what you've just seen minutes ago up there on the screen since it's all so airy and light it tends to waft right out of your skull immediately after leaving the theater, but don't worry, I've made a list of the titles and I'll tick them off as I write about them and that way I may be able to somehow remember little bits and pieces of what I've seen and pass them on to you and—who knows?—maybe even think of something to say about them.

There is one movie in the batch which is outwardly fluffy but which actually possesses considerable substance in that it has enough razor blades and rusty nails scattered in its curly little self to give it body, and I'll put that one at the very end so you can skip it if you don't like ground glass in your marzipan.

#### Auld Lang Syne IV

*Star Trek IV* or *III* is, I suppose, the most successful of the gossamer offerings. It is, like the rest of them, of course, a purely airhead venture, but all its parts fit together, it is aesthetically consistent throughout, the pro-



**SAVE THE WHALES:** *Star Trek IV* delivers gossamer fluff.

duction values are efficient if uninspired, and of course we all love the crew of the *Starship Enterprise* since we grew up with them and they are as much a part of us as our mommies and daddies.

The plot, basically, is what your favorite Trekkie uncle might have come up with when he told you a bedtime story after knocking back a few cock-tails before, and a little wine during, dinner. The planet Earth is threatened with doom (what else?) when a strange ship appears sending out an undecipherable repeating signal, the vibes of which break windows, cause power blackouts, make it rain something fierce, and like that. Kirk and the *Enterprise*, luckily for us, are in Outer Space, far from the danger range of these vibes, and—sure enough!—they figure out what's going on.

It's whales. Yessir, the sound coming from the ship is whale talk, but there aren't any whales anymore on Earth on account of we killed them all off back in the twentieth century, so Kirk and the crew will have to go back in time to Now in order to get a couple of whales and tote them back to The Future (which is, of course, *Star Trek's* Now) so they can talk whale talk back to the signaling ship and make the confounded thing shut up.

Unfortunately the *Enterprise* is not able to contact Earth on account of the blackout and rain and so on, and they have to go to Now and San Francisco all on their own and I won't tell you any more about your uncle's plot because that wouldn't be fair, but I can say that the movie does some perfectly okay clowning around with the *Star Trek* crew trying to get the

PHOTO © 1989 PARAMOUNT PICTURES CORP.

hang of taxis and pay phones and pizza, makes some entirely valid points about our gross mishandling of the ecology, and shows how clever old Spock can make himself pass for human (at least in California) by the simple ploy of wearing a sweat band, and if that sounds like good, clean, innocent fun, friends, it's because that's just what it is.

Besides, it might even discourage a few people from killing whales.

#### From Beverly Hills to the Himalayas

Second best in our spun sugar parade of dreams is *The Golden Child*, an occult comedy wherein Eddie Murphy portrays a Los Angelian tracker of missing children who is actually (sound of gong, please) the mystical Chosen One. It is not clear exactly who—perhaps that should be Who—has chosen Murphy and thereby put him on the case, but the job is to locate and save (another gong, please) a baby lama—grand, I am sure—in order that that lama may (a whole battery of gongs, please) *save us all from ourselves and thereby save the world!* ... One thing about these light little empty-headed movie pictures: they are bold in their self-importance, and *The Golden Child* does push it to the point where it ever trembles on the verge of pomposity.

That disparaging note struck, the movie isn't really all that bad. It is careful to mock its pretensions soundly, and it ends up being very reminiscent of those slick, spooky comedies they used to design for Bob Hope when he was a young smartass. Hope played (sort of hard to believe these days and makes you wonder what'll happen to old Eddie) essentially the same character Murphy does now except for the totally unconvincing macho strong man business which is written into the Murphy fantasies. In *Golden Child*, for instance, Murphy is shown beating up a whole gang of beefy bikers, folding their hulking bodies easily with blows from his tiny little fists.

So the same kind of fun is had with Murphy as was had with Hope by having the forces of good represented by a street-wise—but really not very bright—wiseheimer and the forces of evil represented by sinister, solemn slickies who are obviously cleverer than than he is, and then having the spunky innocent easily eventually defeat his sophisticated enemy's homicidal best.

The dream is funny, but it's also encouraging because it gives you a



GOLDEN CHILD: Macho Murphy.

faint hope that if you (you know you're a clown, right?) are ever unlucky enough to run up against someone or something really dangerous and scary, you might survive the encounter, that you might even win (which, of course, you know you really wouldn't!).

The enemy in *Golden Child* is a demon, played cold as ice and mean as hell by Charles Dance, towering and elegant in a series of Rodeo Drive outfits featuring long leather coats, and assisted by his imps, a nicely worked out bunch of pug uglies. All goes well until the end of the movie when the producers cannot resist turning the demon into a brave try at a special effects version of a Tibetan devil, and that is a mistake because, 1. There is no visual continuity between Dance's demon and the devil, since everybody's gone to lots of trouble throughout the movie to show us that the demon is stately and smooth-moving (in order to provide a humorous contrast to Murphy's funky assortment of windmill movements), and so it makes no sense at all when the special effects devil turns out to be awkward in the extreme and jerky-looking to boot, and I don't for a minute think the makers of the film were trying to make a subtle philosophical point, then, 2. The special effects devil is shown far too clearly and lengthily for one so badly constructed and animated; it might have snuck by for a couple of quick shots, just possibly, but it is far too over-exposed and ends up being even less convincing than Murphy beating up on bikers.

However, generously putting aside this unwise transformation and diverse random crudities along the way, *The*

*Golden Child* is a perfectly fine, rolling-alone type of fantasy adventure which ought to take your mind off whatever's been bothering you very pleasantly for an hour or so, particularly if you help it along with some buttered popcorn.

#### Three Kongs but No Cigar

Some of the fantasy classics of the thirties inspired highly successful sequels; we would all be poorer if *Dracula*, say, or *Frankenstein* had been allowed to stand alone, but others have shown 'twere best to leave them be, and towering among these most mercilessly, is *King Kong*.

It's easy to see why it hasn't been let alone. It seems to cry out for a sequel; and it's great fun to imagine what might happen if Kong or a Son of Kong or a What-not of Kong did this or that or the other. I've played with it, myself. And the lure of profits promised by another exploitation of the "Ninth Wonder of the World" has proven irresistible to producers a number of times, but no one, not even the original bunch who pulled the thing off in the first place, have managed to come up with anything



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**APER MATE:** In latest sequel, Kong falls for lady ape.

which doesn't look like a dismal dud next to the original. Maybe there's a curse on it, something like the one associated with *Macbeth*.

The latest try is *King Kong Lives* and it follows the grand tradition by not catching fire, but I must own it goes down fighting, and sparkles with some promising notions before it sinks into its own bog.

This is the second in the series brought out by the De Laurentiis Group, and it starts off with a marvelously funny notion, a dandy, nutty, satiric concept which, if they'd just let it rip and moved ahead with speed and style and more bodacious guts, might have given them and us a follow up on Kong worth the effort.

The idea is that the giant ape just barely survived his tumble from the

top of the World Trade Building in picture one and has been gradually put together under sedation by a team of surgeons working for one of those vast private medical complexes which lure in new patients and otherwise raise money by committing highly speculative, occasionally dubious, but always delightfully gaudy operations guaranteed to grab headlines and television coverage, and that the surgeons find themselves unable to perform the final operation in the series, the insertion of a gigantic artificial heart, because they have no source of giant ape blood for the transfusions which such an operation would necessitate.

Cute? Cute.

So what happens is that a female Kong is, by a stroke of great good luck, located and shipped to the

medical complex where she can and does act as donor. The operation is done with enormous surgical instruments and a huge crane to lift the living heart from Kong's chest and implant the artificial one, and there is a fine hemorrhage, and if the direction by John Guillermin and the photography by Alec Mills had been better and bolder it might have been absolutely marvelous to see; as it is it is still amusing and interesting. Of course Kong survives the operation, and shortly he and Ms. Kong become aware of one another and fall hopelessly in love.

Still cute? Still cute. But by now we have become increasingly aware of a leadenness in the production which is all the more noticeable because there really is a good movie somewhere around here trying to get out, and then after one or two more good touches (Ms. Kong is incarcerated in a missile silo, for instance) the imagination behind the story line starts to get foggy and complicated and the bold screwiness of the plot gets lost and the drive's gone and we start getting into "and then this happened, and then that happened" as Kong plods through a swamp or the heroine decides the hero's pretty cute after all, and I found myself beginning to notice all those hundreds of miniature trees (there is actually someone specifically credited with being in charge of making miniature trees) and speculating on how uncomfortable it must be to lie on the tiny rocks of a scale model mountain in an ape suit.

This last item brings up one of the great problems of the movie. In most shots of them, both Kong and Ms. Kong are very obviously two guys in ape suits, and sometimes, just in case you hadn't figured it out, there are tight close ups showing their obviously human eyes peering through obvious eyeholes in one or another of their masks (there seem to be different masks for different moods; the sad mask is the one you usually see in the close ups). This makes Mr. Kong and Ms. Kong and Little Baby Kong (who comes later, in the usual order of things) both unconvincing and hard to get emotionally worked up over and, folks, if you can't get emotionally worked up over the Kongs in a Kong movie, there ain't much point to the whole endeavor.

So better luck next time, Mr. De Laurentiis, or whoever it is that takes on the Big Ape next. For all our sakes.

And now for the dangerous  
(continued on page 87)



**KING KONG LIMPS:** A flawed film, but it goes down fighting.

# ILLUMINATIONS



PHOTO BY MANETTE MERRILL

## LEAPS OF FAITH

*"One can't believe impossible things," said Alice.*

*"I daresay you haven't had much experience," said the White Queen. "Why sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."*

Unlike Alice, you and I have had years of practice believing impossible things. Readers of fantasy have a well-developed talent for making leaps of faith. If we're told in a story that vampires lurk in the dark corners of the night, or that elves dwell at the bottoms of our gardens, we're likely to give the storyteller the benefit of the doubt, at least till the end of the tale. But we're not uncritical readers. Writers who are careless or inconsistent, who ignore basic facts of life or nature, rarely get a second look.

In this and future issues, we're going to be taking a new direction. Alongside the tales of the fantastic, and conversations with the people who create them, we're going to be presenting investigations into strange and unusual phenomena. We feel that our readers, who are accustomed to temporarily suspending disbelief, will enjoy these excursions into the mysterious and the unexplained. But in doing so, we don't intend to lose touch with our critical faculties.

I believe that Rod Serling would approve of our voyages into uncharted territory. After all, he himself was the host for several years of a program on the unexplained. But I also believe that he would send us out into that territory with a simple warning—*Look before you leap.*

For example, we're experiencing, as we do every few years, an increase in interest in spirituality and

mysticism. Every day, people appear on the media with messages about other worlds and past lives. We would do well to remember that alongside the true believers are plenty of people willing to take advantage of the unwary. There's no licensing policy for mystics, as there is for plumbers and electricians. Anyone can hang up a shingle saying: "This way to Enlightenment!" and nobody can contradict them.

Unfortunately, too many people forget the lessons they've learned when they first begin to explore the unknown. Just because you've crossed off the map into the white spaces, into the lands marked *Terra Incognita* and *Here Be Dragons*, you shouldn't lose the street-smarts that have protected you in other, better-mapped parts of your life.

So, as we search, we'll be attempting to sort out reality from fantasy, wishes from truth.

There is a difference. Fantasy, to put it simply—is what we *wish* (or fear) might be true. Reality, on the other hand, is what *is*. And often, the truth proves to be richer and far more wonderful than anything we can imagine.

A roommate of mine in college, who'd grown disillusioned with America and its values, left school to travel the East in search of enlightenment. When I saw him a year later, he was dressed in robes and had a shaven head, but that old skeptical twinkle was still in his eye.

"Well," I asked him: "Did you find *satori*?"

"No," he said with a sudden smile. "But I saw Nepal!"

—Tappan King

# ILLUMINATIONS



PHOTO © 1986 CAPITAL CITIES/ABC, INC.

## CRYSTAL REVELATIONS

Rows and rows of raw, uncut amethyst; quartz glistening by the handful; polished obsidian ground into spheres reflecting a case of rose quartz which surrounds it. Although it sounds like you've stumbled into a medieval apothecary, the site is a bit more contemporary: Crystal Village at 77 Perry Street in Manhattan.

At Crystal Village, and stores like it, the crystals have more substance behind them than simply being pretty things to look at. In fact, there is an intriguing philosophy which surrounds them . . .

Since the days of the Egyptian Pharaohs (and, some contend, since Atlantis) crystals have been used to produce energy, to heal, and to guide their users spiritually. It's a scientific fact that when heated, crystals produce electricity. Moreover, quartz—the kind present in most watches—amplifies electrical current due to its structure. So

when a quartz crystal comes in contact with your body, a circuit of sorts is completed and energy starts to flow, magnified as it passes through the crystal.

Although the physical properties of the crystal are well established, the spiritual dimension is less easy to explain. According to Tony Locane of Crystal Village, crystals serve to focus energy. Quartz, which is the clearest and highest vibrator (save the diamond) is an energy disperser. Rose quartz, believers say, works primarily with the heart energy. Malacite focuses the "yang" or masculine energy, serving as a physical healer. Adventure helps people evolve spiritually. "The Kings and Queens of the past knew what they were doing with crowns of diamonds and emeralds and scepters of rubies," says Locane. "They were human batteries, stores of energy."

And you thought your diamond earrings only attracted compliments.

—Christopher Karwowski

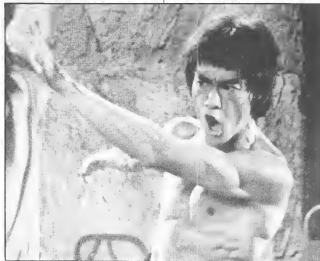
## BAD FENG-SHUI KILLED BRUCE LEE

If New Age acquaintances offer to "fungshway" your home or office, don't expect them to pull out a can of roach spray: they're trying to rid your place not just of termites—but of bad luck.

*Feng shui* is looming as the next yuppie New Age trend, with extravagant claims by its advocates. Good *feng shui*, followers aver, can lead to effortless wealth, success over rivals, improved health, domestic bliss, better sex, and even world power. Bad *feng shui*? You don't want bad *feng shui*: it allegedly makes you a victim of bad food, bad loans, arguments, anxiety, backaches . . . and violent

relaxed and productive in comfortable living and work situations. But over centuries, aesthetics evolved or degenerated into peasant magic—word got around that *feng shui* focused, and even caused, good or bad luck. Talismans were added to demons (rather like lucky horseshoes or Amish hex signs); sorcerers and magicians added rituals, rigamaroles, numbingly complex charts, astrology, and mutterings about dragons; *feng shui* became mysterious.

Today, in Hong Kong and Singapore, the more mystic form of *feng shui* prevails as a lucrative industry. Corporations fight *feng shui* battles; people sue neighbors if new



death. Violent death? Bruce Lee, we are told, was killed by bad *feng shui*. So was actor Gig Young. Chiang Kai-Shek was desposed when Mao Zedong destroyed the source of Chiang's good *feng shui*!

Actually *feng shui* is the "art of placement." Basically—and quite legitimately—Chinese aesthetics, landscaping and design. Good *feng shui* is simply harmonious design: in other words, people tend to be more

buildings alter existing *feng shui*; realtors describe *feng shui* specifics in rentals ads. And a lot of money changes hands.

Now *feng shui* has landed in America, and been glitzed and glammed into Occult Interior Design: How to Acupuncture Your Space. It's quick, it's expensive, there are no boring mantras to chant. But does *feng shui* work? Or one level—yes, absolutely. Obviously, if you live in a small dark

# ILLUMINATIONS

cramped apartment—put up a few strategically placed mirrors, pictures, plants and lights; the result won't be Taj Mahal, but you'll probably feel better and more comfortable. That's certainly good *feng shui*. As to the rest? Well, everyone wants to improve their luck. Maybe occult interior decorating does work—if so, swell. But if you go broke trying to redecorate your fortune ... tough *feng shui*.

—Mark Arnold

## STRANGE HANGUPS

Looking for a way to increase the quantum weirdness of your space? If your tastes (and your income) have progressed beyond lobby cards for Japanese monster flicks, the answer just might be vintage movie posters.

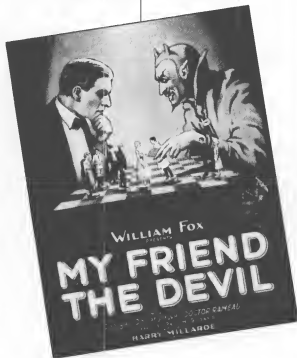
Firms such as the Motion Picture Arts Gallery on East 58th Street in New York City specialize in the area and offer a wide variety of posters, both recent and

those dating back to the silent era.

If your interest in film posters runs toward science fiction, fantasy, or horror, MPAG has a choice selection of the classics as well as some of the cheesiest films you thought never could have been produced. *Superman vs. The Molemen* hangs alongside *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. For those whose tastes are a bit more "classical" MPAG also offers such vintage titles as *Gone With the Wind*, *Casablanca*, and *The Wizard of Oz* ... All originals from the year of their release.

While the tab for some pieces (up to five thousand dollars) may make you grab your MasterCard in self-defense, MPAG also offers many lesser-known posters for more reasonable prices. However, if your heart is set on owning the *Metropolis* poster which hung at the opening of the film, be prepared to forgo that Jamaican vacation this winter.

—Chris Karwowski



## EXPEDITIONS TO THE UNKNOWN

In the past year, Bill Cacciolfi has searched for the *yeti* in Nepal, discovered a lost Egyptian tomb, and hunted dinosaurs in the Congo. Described by reporters as "the real Indiana Jones," but more nearly resembling Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Professor Challenger, Cacciolfi explores mysteries unsolved and actual "final frontiers"—and, for a price, you can go with him.

In 1986, Cacciolfi, a twenty-seven-year-old former Air Force science technician, and neuropsychologist Dr. Marc Miller co-founded a "travel adventure" service, New World Expeditions. Their initial plan was simply to lead tours to explore exotic locales—but Cacciolfi quickly found that prospective clients' interest waned upon hearing that each sojourn would take months and cost thousands of dollars. Then Cacciolfi and Miller combined "adventure travel with research" and specific goals; response changed. Apparently, it's one thing to spend a winter tromping through an equatorial swamp for fun ... quite another to be looking for the *mokele-mbembe* and the *nguma-monene* (legendary giant reptiles—dinosaurs?—recorded by Dr. Roy Mackel's University of Chicago expeditions to the Congo in the early 1980's).

Does Cacciolfi really expect to find the Abominable Snowman, or prehistoric Lost Worlds? The explorer is open-minded. The point, he insists, is: if an expedition does find a dinosaur, "we'll all be rich and famous"; if not, the expeditions will gather valuable ethnological, ecological,



and zoological data; while members *actually live the kind of adventure most of us think exists only in movies and moldering pulp magazines*.

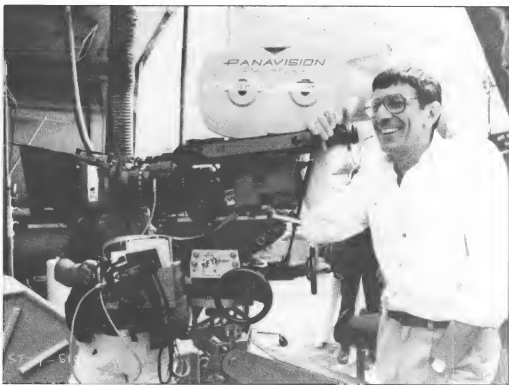
Believer or not, Cacciolfi's track record for results is startling. The 1986 Nepal expedition returned from the Himalayas with a fur sample belonging to no known animal. The expedition to Mt. Korna, Egypt, discovered new burial sites in the Valley of Tombs.

In 1987, '88, and '89, Cacciolfi plans to mount new expeditions to Nepal, Egypt, and the Congo; take a film crew to deep-Saharan oases; lead a white-water canoeing tour of Central Russia; map unexplored islands off Madagascar, seeking human relics, and possibly new species of lemur; and study Stone-Age cannibals in Papua, New Guinea. The tours cost an average of four to eight thousand dollars per member. If this all intrigues you, you might want to write Cacciolfi at New World Expeditions, 108 Dayton Street, Suite B, Yellow Springs, OH 45387. Who knows what you might find?

—Mark Arnold



# ILLUMINATIONS



## THE MAN WHO WOULD BE SPOCK

For twenty years, Leonard Nimoy has struggled with his association with the half-human, half-Vulcan Science Officer of the Starship *Enterprise*. For better or for worse, part of him will always be Mr. Spock.

Of course, Nimoy, now 55, has had a successful life apart from Spock. He and his wife Sandi, who have been married since 1954, have two grown children, Julie, 31 and Adam, 30. He's written five volumes of poetry, and recorded ten albums, has operated his own drama studio, owned a publishing company, and acted in and directed numerous television shows, plays, and films.

Still, the identification was so strong that Nimoy once vowed he would never play the part again. "I remember in the 70's going on local television in Des Moines to publicize my one-man show about the life of Van Gogh. All the interviewer would ask me about was Spock. That drove me a little nuts."

In 1975 he went so far as to write an autobiography titled *I Am Not Spock*. There were even rumors that when he agreed to make *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* in 1982, he insisted that Spock be killed off in the film's climax.

"I've heard those rumors, too, and they aren't true," says Nimoy. "The whole twenty-year trip for me has been a love affair. I've had my ups and downs with it. After the first film, I thought it was all over. But at a party at my house, Harve Bennett asked: 'How'd you like to do a great death scene?' I laughed, but I was intrigued, and that's how it started."

The joke turned out to be on Nimoy after all. When he worked on *Star Trek II*, the last scene he shot was Spock's death. But when he attended a screening, the final shot of the completed film suggested that we had not seen the last of Spock. "After seeing that, I knew immediately

I'd be getting a call from Paramount," he says with a laugh.

Of course, he didn't know then that Paramount was also going to offer him the chance to direct the next two films, or that each would have its own distinctive tone. While *Star Trek III* was solemn and even mystical, *Star Trek IV* is joyous and comical. "After the death of Spock and the destruction of the *Enterprise*," says Nimoy, "I thought it was time to lighten up. We had done comedy in the series fairly regularly, but we had not done much comedy in the film before."

In fact, Nimoy found that he had more creative control than he had before. "They told me when they hired me that the training wheels were off. They wanted this one to be my vision." Nimoy was inspired to add a non-violent, ecological theme to the script (which he co-wrote with Bennett) after reading Harvard biologist Edward Wilson's *Biophilia*. "The non-violence in the film is absolutely deliberate. No one shoots anybody in this film," he says with obvious pride.

Nimoy is clearly disturbed, however, at the prospect of the new *Star Trek* television series, produced by Gene Roddenberry for Paramount, which features an all-new cast. "I like the people who are doing it. They're friends of mine, and they've asked me to be involved, but I'd rather move on to other things."

Oddly enough, one of the things Nimoy's moving on to is *Star Trek V*, which is already in the works. It will be directed not by Spock, but by Captain Kirk's alter ego, William Shatner. "I will absolutely be a part of that," he says with a grin. "But I'll just act in it. I'll watch Bill suffer this time."

—James Verniere

# INTERVIEW:



PHOTO BY BETH GWINN/LOCUS

## Talking Terror With **CLIVE BARKER**

by Douglas E. Winter

**D**uring a 1983 visit with Ramsey Campbell, I was presented with a mountainous manuscript of short stories by an unpublished Liverpool playwright named Clive Barker. "You're about to read the most important new horror writer of this decade," Campbell told me. After reading only fifty of the thousand-plus pages, I was convinced that he was right.

The manuscript, divided into three volumes, was published in England in 1984 as Clive Barker's Books of Blood, and its author soon became horror fiction's hottest property since Stephen King. Barker quickly captured a World Fantasy Award and several motion picture contracts; his first novel, The Damnation Game, was nominated for England's prestigious Booker Prize; and a second trilogy of Books of Blood was commissioned. Along the way, Barker became something of a cause célèbre, championed in publications as diverse as Fangoria, Publisher's Weekly, and Women's Wear Daily.

There is little mystery about Clive Barker's sudden success. The Books of Blood offer a strikingly bold vision, and some of the most provocative tales of terror ever published. Barker's charismatic personality and boyish good looks have made him a darling of the interview set. And his output of horror fiction has proved seemingly unstoppable: Berkley published the American paperback editions of the first three Books of Blood in 1986, while The Inhuman Condition, published last fall in hardcover by Simon & Schuster's Poseidon Press, began the second three-book cycle (In the Flesh and The Life of Death will appear early in 1987). Two horror films based on Barker screenplays, Underworld and Rawhead Rex, should find their way to our shores by the summer. In the fall, Ace Putnam will release the American hardcover of The Damnation Game, and Poseidon Press will release Barker's second novel, Weaveworld, close on its heels.

Our interview took place as Barker completed special effects photography on his directorial debut, Hellraiser, which New World Pictures has scheduled for release this August.

**WINTER:** In little more than three years, you've taken the horror field by storm, garnering the kind of press coverage and fan excitement that previously seemed reserved only to Stephen King. Have you often asked yourself the inevitable question: "Why me?"

**BARKER:** Yes. Many, many times. And I genuinely don't know. I am extremely grateful and happy that it has happened, but I am a little surprised. You know—but perhaps the readers of TZ won't know—that I have been working for years in various fields writing plays and stuff, and that I've managed to eke out an extremely thin living, if a living at all. And then something which I'm doing more for my own pleasure than anything else—something nearly recreational—proves a source of considerable critical and financial success! It's all very gratifying, but it's also very surprising.

I have a considerable love of

*"I push everything.  
When my stuff is  
bloody, it's very  
bloody. When it's  
sexy, it's very  
sexy. When it's  
funny, it's  
ludicrous. I  
don't like half  
measures."*

horror—and I hope that it shows—but so do many other writers working in the field. I have the urges of a populist and an entertainer, but then again, so do many of those same writers.

I do have an urge to perversity that perhaps is a little more thoroughgoing than that of some of my fellow writers; I mean, if I sniff predictability in what I'm doing, it immediately turns me off and I put down the pen. That makes the stories a little outrageous for some tastes, but it does mean that readers come to the stories knowing they're going to get something that is not quite like anything else. It would have to be that quality which I assume has proved fruitful.

I mean, it's there in the publicity for Hellraiser: "There are no limits." I've never censored myself. I've never pursued a road of inquiry and then stopped halfway through because I know it was leading to somewhere grimmer than I could face. I've never removed any sexual subtext from my work; instead, I've tended to pursue it with some gusto. And I've never assumed that anything was too appalling or too extraordinary for my read-

ers. I've always assumed that my readers were as brave and foolhardy and sick as I am.

**WINTER:** Do you see your successes in any way a product of our times?

**BARKER:** It would be tempting to do the sociological study—to say that, in this day and age, it is very difficult to find much that you can't talk about, and that the guy who comes up and says, "Look, I've found some things you've never even thought of before," is bound to be of interest, if not a freak.

I don't consider that to be all of the equation. My success comes from the obvious source: I like telling stories. Most of the elements that appeal to my readers, if my fan mail is correct, are extremely conventional: I try to mix some humor and sex with some adventure, some forward momentum. And I put a half-twist on those elements that takes those adventures into darker realms, perhaps, than previous authors have visited.

There are people out there who are doing similar things: David Cronenberg and David Lynch are two people with whom I feel an emotional affinity. I wouldn't have said that of Lynch, actually, until seeing *Blue Velvet*; but it quite clearly shares territory with some of my stories.

*Blue Velvet* doesn't care whether it is ridiculous or not; it assumes, and I think rightly, that ridiculousness is in the eye of the beholder. Moments which move toward ludicrousness can also be a kind of emotional apotheosis. And it's no use trying to defend oneself from the possibility of being ludicrous because there's always going to be some clever son of a bitch out there who thinks that your finest and deepest sentiment is a laugh; so the best thing to do is simply go for it. Lynch does that in *Blue Velvet*, and I do that in my stories.

It's clear that Cronenberg's material couldn't have been put on the screen in 1930, and I assume that my books wouldn't have had much of a readership in 1930. So maybe there is a sense in which we are coming to the end of the second thousand years, and we are looking at ourselves in a slightly different fashion, feeling different things about our world.

**WINTER:** Does it concern you that you may be earning something of a reputation as a writer of graphic sex and violence?

**BARKER:** Obviously, the reputation doesn't bear out upon a reading of the books. Sure, there's "Midnight Meat Train" and "Rawhead Rex," but there's

(continued on page 27)



# DOWN, SATAN!

*To win his way into Heaven,  
he built a Hell on earth.*

by Clive Barker

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT EAGLE

Circumstances had made Gregorius rich beyond all calculation. He owned fleets and palaces; stallions; cities. Indeed he owned so much that to those who were finally charged with enumerating his possessions—when the events of this story reached their monstrous conclusion—it sometimes seemed it might be quicker to list the items Gregorius did *not* own.

Rich he was, but far from happy. He had been raised a Catholic, and in his early years—before his dizzying rise to fortune—he'd found succor in his faith. But he'd neglected it, and it was only at the age of fifty-five, with the world at his feet, that he woke one night and found himself Godless.

It was a bitter blow, but he immediately took steps to make good his loss. He went to Rome and spoke with the Supreme Pontiff; he prayed night and day; he founded seminaries and leper colonies. God, however, declined to show so much as His toenail. Gregorius, it seemed, was forsaken.

Almost despairing, he took it into his head that he could only win his way back into the arms of his Maker if he put his soul into the direst jeopardy. The notion had some merit. Suppose, he thought, I could contrive a meeting with Satan, the Archfiend. Seeing me *in extremis*, would not God be obliged to step in and deliver me back into the fold?

It was a fine plot, but how was he to realize it? The Devil did not just

come at a call, even for a tycoon such as Gregorius, and his researches soon proved that all the traditional methods of summoning the Lord of Vermin—the defiling of the Blessed Sacrament, the sacrificing of babes—were no more effective than his good works had been at provoking Yahweh. It was only after a year of deliberation that he finally fell upon his master plan. He would arrange to have built a hell on earth—a modern inferno so monstrous that the Tempter would be tempted, and come to roost there like a cuckoo in a usurped nest.

He searched high and low for an architect and found, languishing in a madhouse outside Florence, a man called Leopardo, whose plans for Mussolini's palaces had a lunatic grandeur that suited Gregorius's project perfectly. Leopardo was taken from his cell—a fetid, wretched old man—and given his dreams again. His genius for the prodigious had not deserted him.

In order to fuel his invention the great libraries of the world were scoured for descriptions of hells both secular and metaphysical. Museum vaults were ransacked for forbidden images of martyrdom. No stone was left unturned if it was suspected something perverse was concealed beneath.

The finished designs owed something to de Sade and to Dante, and something more to Freud and Kraft-Ebing, but there was also much there that no mind had conceived of before,

or at least ever dared set to paper.

A site in North Africa was chosen, and work on Gregorius's New Hell began. Everything about the project broke the records. Its foundations were vaster, its walls thicker, its plumbing more elaborate than any edifice hitherto attempted. Gregorius watched its slow construction with an enthusiasm he had not tasted since his first years as an empire builder. Needless to say, he was widely thought to have lost his mind. Friends he had known for years refused to associate with him. Several of his companies collapsed when investors took fright at reports of his insanity. He didn't care. His plan could not fail. The Devil would be bound to come, if only out of curiosity to see this leviathan built in his name, and when he did, Gregorius would be waiting.

The work took four years and the better part of Gregorius's fortune. The finished building was the size of half a dozen cathedrals and boasted every facility the Angel of the Pit could desire. Fires burned behind its walls, so that to walk in many of its corridors was almost unendurable agony. The rooms off those corridors were fitted with every imaginable device of persecution—the needle, the rack, the dark—that the genius of Satan's torturers be FROM THE INHUMAN CONDITION BY CLIVE BARKER. COPYRIGHT © 1985 BY CLIVE BARKER. REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF POSEIDON PRESS, A DIVISION OF SIMON & SCHUSTER, INC.

# SATAN!

given fair employ. There were ovens large enough to cremate families; pools deep enough to drown generations. The New Hell was an atrocity waiting to happen; a celebration of inhumanity that only lacked its first cause.

The builders withdrew, and thankfully. It was rumored among them that Satan had long been watching over the construction of his pleasure dome. Some even claimed to have glimpsed him on the deeper levels, where the chill was so profound it froze the piss in your bladder. There was some evidence to support the belief in supernatural presences converging on the building as it neared completion, not least the cruel death of Leopardo, who had either thrown himself or—the superstitious argued—been pitched through his sixth-story hotel window. He was buried with due extravagance.

So now, alone in hell, Gregorius waited.

He did not have to wait long. He had been there a day, no more, when he heard noises from the lower depths. Anticipation brimming, he went in search of their source, but found only the rolling of excrement baths and the rattling of ovens. He returned to his suite of chambers on the ninth level and waited. The noises came again; again he went in search of their source; again he came away disappointed.

The disturbances did not abate, however. In the days that followed scarcely ten minutes would pass without his hearing some sound of occupancy. The Prince of Darkness was here, Gregorius could have no doubt of it, but he was keeping to the shadows. Gregorius was content to play along. It was the Devil's party, after all. His to play whatever game he chose. But during the long and often lonely months that followed, Gregorius wearied of this hide-and-seek and began to demand that Satan show himself. His voice rang unanswered down the deserted corridors, however, until his throat was bruised with shouting. Thereafter he went about his searches stealthily, hoping to catch his tenant unawares. But the Apostate Angel always flitted away before Gregorius could step within sight of him.

They would play a waiting game,

it seemed, he and Satan, chasing each other's tails through ice and fire and ice again. Gregorius told himself to be patient. The Devil had come, hadn't he? Wasn't that his fingerprint on the door handle? His turd on the stairs? Sooner or later the Fiend would show his face, and Gregorius would spit on it.

The world outside went on its way, and Gregorius was consigned to the company of other recluses who had been ruined by wealth. His Folly, as it was known, was not entirely without visitors, however. There were a few who had loved him too much to forget him—a few, also, who had

*They would play a waiting game, he and Satan, chasing each other's tails through ice and fire. Sooner or later he would show his face, and Gregorius would spit on it.*

profited by him and hoped to turn his madness to their further profit—who dared the gates of the New Hell. These visitors made the journey without announcing their intentions, fearing the disapproval of their friends. The investigations into their subsequent disappearance never reached as far as North Africa.

And in his folly Gregorius still chased the Serpent, and the Serpent still eluded him, leaving only more and more terrible signs of his occupancy as the months went by.

It was the wife of one of the missing visitors who finally discovered the truth and alerted the authorities. Gregorius's Folly was put under surveillance, and finally—some three years after its completion—a quartet of officers braved the threshold.

Without maintenance the Folly had begun to deteriorate badly. The lights had failed on many of the levels, its walls had cooled, its pitch pits solidified. But as the officers advanced through the gloomy vaults in search of Gregorius they came upon

ample evidence that despite its decrepit condition the New Hell was in good working order. There were bodies in the ovens, their faces wide and black. There were human remains seated and strung up in many of the rooms, gouged and pricked and slit to death.

Their terror grew with every door they pressed open, every new abomination their fevered eyes fell upon.

Two of the four who crossed the threshold never reached the chamber at its center. Terror overtook them on their way and they fled. Only to be waylaid on some choked passageway and added to the hundreds who had perished in the Folly since Satan had taken residence.

Of the pair who finally unearthed the perpetrator, only one had courage enough to tell his story, though the scenes he faced there in the Folly's heart were almost too terrible to bear relating.

There was no sign of Satan, of course. There was only Gregorius. The master builder, finding no one to inhabit the house he had sweated over, had occupied it himself. He had with him a few disciples whom he'd mustered over the years. They, like him, seemed unremarkable creatures. But there was not a torture device in the building they had not made thorough and merciless use of.

Gregorius did not resist. Indeed he seemed pleased to have a platform from which to boast of his butcheries. Then, and later at his trial, he spoke freely of his ambition and his appetite; and of how much more blood he would spill if they would only set him free to do so. Enough to drown all belief and its delusions, he swore. And still he would not be satisfied. For God was rotting in paradise, and Satan in the abyss, and who was to stop him?

He was much reviled during the trial, and later in the asylum where under some suspicious circumstances, he died barely two months later. The Vatican expunged all report of him from its records. The seminaries founded in his unholy name were dissolved.

But there were those, even among the cardinals, who could not put his unrepentant malice out of their heads, and—in the privacy of their doubt—wondered if he had not succeeded in his strategy. If, in giving up all hope of angels—fallen or otherwise—he had not become one himself.

Or all that earth could bear of such phenomena. ■

# BARKER

(continued from page 23)

a lot of stuff that's less excessive in terms of the gross-out.

The thing is, I just don't push the gore—I push *everything*. When my stuff is bloody, it's very bloody; but when my stuff is sexy, it's very sexy. When it's funny, it's very ludicrous. I don't like half measures. That's why, when people write to me, they often say, "I really loved this and this, and I really hated and abhorred such and such." There's no real middle-ground.

So I don't think I'm a gorehound. I am an *excess-hound*: I like to push stories and events and characters to the limits. I would be very distressed if my readership were reading simply to see people torn apart or whatever. That would be a bit like going to *King Lear* just to see Gloucester's eyes put out, or to Webster to see simply the deaths.

I'm not in the genre to gross people out. And I don't write narratives just to give me good chances to gross people out. My narratives, as I create them, lead to moments of *frisson* that to be rather dark and distressing. Some of the moments of distress are going to be gross-outs, but some of them are going to be revelations, moments in which our vision of the world is turned upside down.

I'm looking to produce a whole texture in my stories, one which is about character and about social insight, and maybe even about mythic insight. And while the blood and gore are very much a part of that, they're only a part.

I'm interested in writing fiction that appeals to the readership that wishes to be disturbed and distressed, but finds that being disturbed and distressed by gross-out is too much for them. And I know that those people are out there, because I know people who will not see Cronenberg's films, even though they like Cronenberg's world view. Now I find that paradoxical: the people who spend all of the best bits of *The Fly* with their hands over their eyes but nevertheless come out knowing that it was a good picture.

I want to get through to that audience; I don't want them saying, "Barker is too much for me." I want to seduce readers into my narratives, and appeal to readers of stories of every complexion: stories without bloodlet-

ting but considerable *frisson*, and also the readership who will want to read about "Rawhead Rex," who eats babies and pisses on virgins.

**WINTER:** How does *Weaveworld* fit into the Clive Barker canon?

**BARKER:** The publicity will probably call the book a "novel of epic fantasy." *Weaveworld* follows the visionary strand in the *Books of Blood*: stories like "In the Hills, the Cities", stories that try to present images that are wildly outlandish and unusual, where I'm trying to push my imagination—and the reader's imagination—to the limit.

The book is extremely dark; in fact, some parts are darker than any of my stuff that is marketed as horror. Some of it is aimed in all sorts of extraordinary directions. But I didn't set pen to paper thinking that I would write a fantasy novel, because I think those definitions suck.

I have never liked the division between horror fiction and fantasy fiction and science fiction. There is a *fantastique* genre—Stephen King's fiction is *fantastique*, in the classic and proper sense. In the sense that it explores something which is unlikely, to say the least—something which is an imagined thing. One day, in a more enlightened age, Marquez and Borges and King and Machen—and probably Dickens—will all be studied on the same syllabus, because they are all authors who reinvent the world.

Now in one sense, all authors reinvent the world; but some of us do it with more enthusiasm than others, with more desire to see the world shaped to our particular longings and anxieties.

I do not consider myself a horror writer, any more than I consider myself a fantasy writer or science fiction writer. I am a writer who works in my imagination. The only difference in the world in literature, it seems to me, is between the guy who writes out of a perceived reality and the guy who creates one for himself.

**WINTER:** You've been a playwright, an artist, an author, a screenwriter, and now a director. What's next?

**BARKER:** More of everything, I hope. I'm definitely going to do more books and more movies.

I turned down the job of writing the screenplay for *Aliens 3*. I think that I should be pursuing my own stuff. What I do best is imagine. I didn't like the idea of picking up on somebody else's narrative.

So I'm starting a new novel, another very big book, another very dark book, set in America—about which I can't say anything else. And

I'm talking about two new directing projects, one of which would be based on one of the short stories.

**WINTER:** So you're not planning to leave writing for films?

**BARKER:** Oh God, no! There's so much that I have planned for writing that I could never put onto film. And there's so much I've got planned for writing that they'd never let me put on film, both in terms of horrific fiction and the erotic as well.

**WINTER:** How have you coped with such a sudden, overwhelming and, as you've noted, unexpected success?

**BARKER:** It hasn't changed the way I live. I've bought a slightly larger apartment. I probably drink higher-priced liquor than before. I take more cabs.

But I'm a workaholic, and I probably will be until it kills me. I also don't have a taste for the high life. I don't have a taste for jet-setting or exotic locations.

My concerns are with my work, with new projects and ideas. And my commitment to that is constant. When I receive a new edition or a review of a book, I'm pleased and proud and happy, but the question then is: What

(continued on page 86)

## "GREAT FUN!"

—RAY BRADBURY, AUTHOR OF THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES

"THIS IS WHAT I CALL A REAL LAUGHING MATTER."

—ROBERT BLOCH, AUTHOR OF PSYCHO

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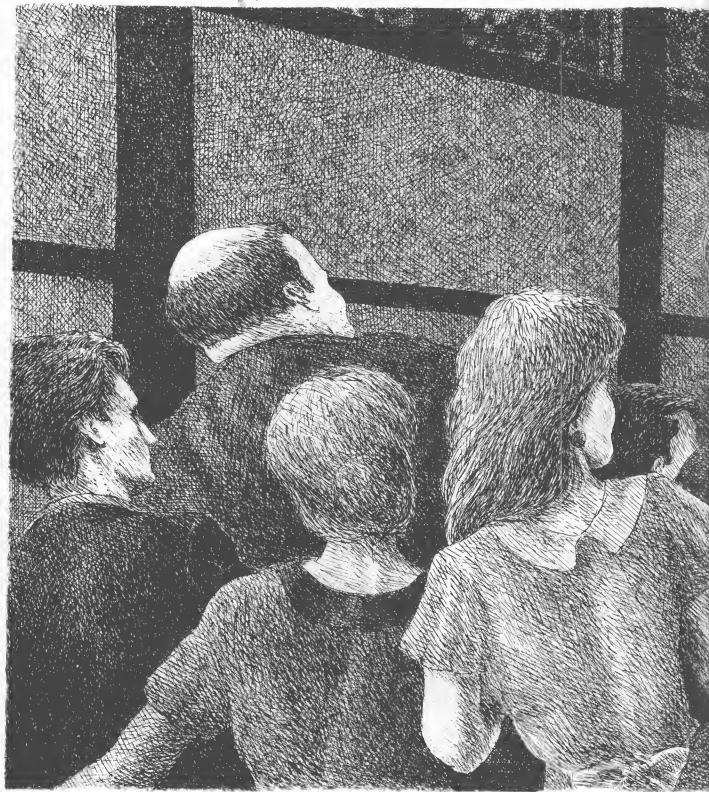
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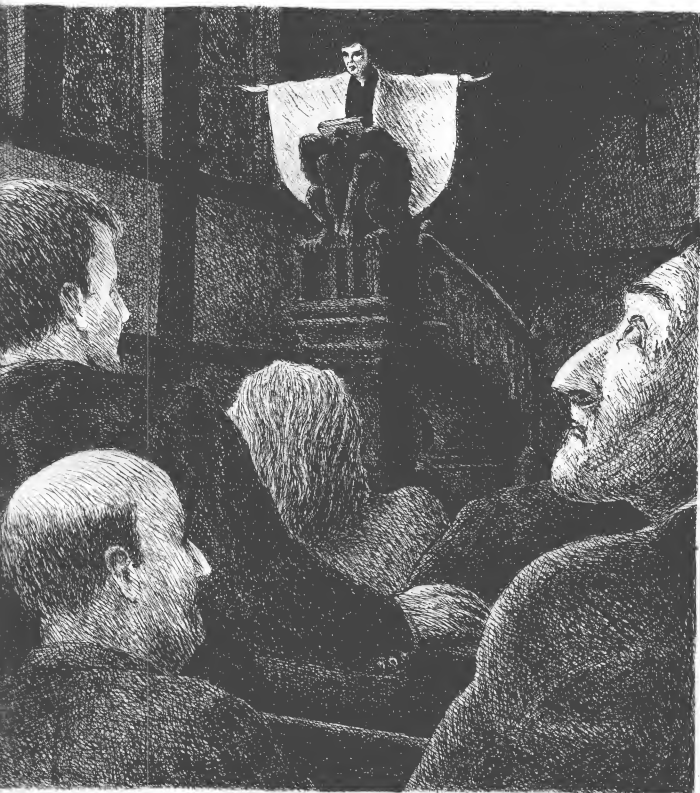
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THE  
EXERCISE<sup>OF</sup> FAITH





*A soul in torment may  
surrender itself to the  
heady scent of evil.*

**by Lucius Shepard**

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN BOWDREN

**F**rom my pulpit, carved of ebony into a long-snouted griffin's head, I can see the sins of my parishioners. It's as if a current is flowing from face to face, illuminating the secret meaning of every wrinkle and line and nuance of expression. They—like their sins—are an ordinary lot. Children as fidgety as gnats. Ruddy-cheeked men possessed by the demons of real estate, solid citizens with weak hearts and brutal arguments for wives. Women whose thoughts slide like swaths

of gingham though their minds, married every one to lechers and layabouts. Yet for all their commonality, the congregation is remarkable in that their sins mesh, are wholly compatible with one another. For every potential pederast there is a young boy in the first flush of his deviancy, for every violent urge a seeker of pain, and for every bitter widow a lust of knitting-needle sharpness with which to mend the piece-work of her days. This has always seemed to me a circumstance worth ex-

# EXERCISE

plotting, though until recently I had no idea as to how that should be done.

Not only can I see my parishioners' sins, I am able to experience them, both talents visited upon me by, I believe, the church. It is an ancient house of worship, its white plaster walls and black beams emblematic of the Puritan rigor whose sanctity it was built to guarantee, and it is graced by twelve stained-glass windows, each depicting a beast framed by a border of grape leaves. Legend tells that its cool dry air seethes with the caliginous spirits of old killed witches, most of them dead at the hands of the first pastor here, one Jeremy Calder, a man gone bloody with the love of God. However, I doubt his astral presence or that of his victims is responsible for the inception of my psychic gifts. No, rather I feel these gifts are a product of the essence of the place and time, for that, it strikes me, is the nature of all extremes of reality, be they good or evil: that they are bred from the interaction of a thousand ephemera, the conjunction of congruent normalcies that together act to compound an anomaly . . . But I was going to tell you how I experience my congregation's sins.

This morning as I stand on the steps in my surplice after the eleven o'clock service, with the red and yellow leaves of the sycamores and birches that line the street bristling and flashing like semaphores under the high sun, I greet each by name and shake their hands, and with every touch a vision opens in my brain. Take Emily Prideau, now, Child of Bess and Robert. Sixteen years old; nubile; sweet. Her breasts molded into prim curves by the pink starched decorum of her Sunday dress. Yet from her fingers courses the vision of a midnight wood, where cross-armed she lifts her sweater and those heavy breasts bound free, globed pale and perfect by the moonlight, and next, smiling, she looses her wraparound skirt, proving underwear-less, erecting the dry-throated boy who gazes drumstruck at her curly secret. "Do me first," she says, and as he kneels to her, I feel the pleat of pleasure triggered by his tongue.

"Wonderful sermon, Reverend," she says, parroting her dad, and I am forced to restrain a laugh, amused not by the incongruity of the compliment in

relation to her thoughts, but by the fact of the compliment itself. My sermons are mild and cautionary nothings, annotated with announcements of bake sales and raffles, and do not attempt salvation. For what purpose should I save them? Heaven? That curdled fantasy has long since fled my brain, and God's absence is everywhere . . . although I have sensed a scrap of His divinity floating in the belfry, as flat and black as a shadow, and know that he only waits the proper summons to return transformed into a God suitable to the times. That, you see, is the core principle of the divine, that we must pour It full of sins—as, indeed, I have

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love of God.*

been filled during the six years of my ministry—and kill It, and then resurrect It in new form, a vessel suitable for the shapes of contemporary wrongdoing.

Purse clasped to her belly, Emily strolls off 'twixt Bess and Robert into the myth of her virginity, and I am confronted by the banker, Miles Elbee, a sapless twig of a sinner gone gray at forty, weathered and wrinkled as a man half-again his age. From his perfunctory shake I have a glistening of leather, a whipcrack, and an exultant scream. He always withdraws his hand so quickly. I wonder if he knows I see his passion for submissiveness and is ashamed. "Fine morning," he says, and with a tailored smile, he joins the menfolk on the walk to discuss the NFL. And here, Marge Trombley extends her white-gloved hand. Auburn hair and a pale face so delicately engraved with thirty years of suffering, it seems as exquisitely wrought as a cameo. Ah, Marge! Your sin is the sweetest fellow to my own. From the pressure of your fingertips I am blessed with the sight of you and me coupling in the choir stall. And something else beneath that sight, a

dark knurl of more-than-secret . . . sin (Have I mentioned that locked in every heart is the knotty shape of the last and greatest evil of which we are capable?). I return the pressure, letting it linger a moment too long for propriety, infusing those lovely features with a blush.

"I am hoping to see Jeffrey one Sunday," I say. This initiates a litany between us. Jeffrey is the ne'erest of ne'er-do-wells, given to weekend binges and wife-beating; he has never set foot in St. Mary's, and our exchanges concerning him rarely vary.

"He's been sick," she says. "And he's depressed about his job." A smile breaks the lock of suffering. "I'll try to bring him along next week." Then, leaning close, a whisper. "I must talk to you, Reverend."

I respond that unfortunately I'm off to a church conference for the week—a lie—but that the Saturday evening after my return will be free. If she would care to stop by around sevenish. . . ? She would, indeed, Marge. Marge. Is this to be our flowering?

And so it goes, one Episcopal life after another: neatly decked-out shells enfolding a chaos of frustrations.

Once they have all made their way homeward or to lunch or tennis, I sit in the back pew, drinking the last of the communion wine and staring at the animals in their light-stained, grape-bordered universe. They stare back from the windows, trembling with life. They are alive. I mean this not in the ordinary mystical sense, but in one common to a grander age, the age of Jeremy Calder and his witches, who knew the truth that life is an idea. Every bubbled imperfection in the glass holds a germ of principle, the lead mullions flow with the conception of rivers, and as I watch, the bear lifts his snout from a golden honeycomb and grumbles a prayer for my salvation; he is the holiest of the lot, a gentle monster whose last red meal was so long ago that he has forgotten the call of the blood and now passes the hours in monastic contemplation. The owl, a persnickety old darkness, nods judgmentally; the lamb gambols, beckoning me to sin with flirtatious wags of its bobbed tail. They each have some comment to make on my performance, my life . . . all, that is, except the lion. He has never moved or spoken in these six years, and because he is the most beautiful of them, the noblest, he withholds much commentary that I long to hear. I wonder for what stimulus he is waiting. I've heard that Jeremy Calder often carried out private

interrogations of the witches beneath this particular window, and that at times the cries of pain issuing from the church were indistinguishable from cries of womanly pleasure. Could this have silenced my lion? And did Jeremy go probing after Satan, risking the very extent of his manhood in scouring those vessels clean, or like me, was he merely lustful? The intent once mattered, I suppose. But no more. This age suppresses the importance of intent, and what is valued is effect, result, profit.

I swallow the dregs of the wine, and pulp catches between my teeth. I'm pleased, seeing in this an omen, because it's the pulp of life I'm always seeking in the thin wine of existence. The palpable, the chewable. Difficult to minister without some knowledge of those wilds, for we live in a universe of black rules and rudderless stars, and how can one navigate without grounding oneself in the depths of that medium? Thus it is I must indulge my needs from time to time ... though in truth I need no excuse for indulgence. I'm a hale man in my early forties, my wife is dead, and I have met no suitable replacement, unless good Marge Trombley were to unshackle from her Jeffrey. Sigh. Would that it were so! I gaze at my warped reflection in the bottle glass. Its emptiness is my own. But not for long. A sense of purpose has lately begun stealing over me, less an emotion than a physical condition, yet embodying qualities of both. Perhaps it will come clear at the "church conference."

Two-hundred-and-eight miles from Fallon, where St. Mary's lies in whiteness, lies the town of Corn River, and on its southern outskirts stands an old brick house, home to the beautiful Serena de Miron (née Carla DiLuca) a purveyor of Greek, French, and various Third World nationalities so exotic in character that not even the Bible was sufficiently wise to warn against them. Other girls live in the house, but it is Serena I fancy ... Serena who knows well the muscular analogues of my spiritual requirements. Black hair, pale unblemished skin, the face of an angel by Degas, and as fine a set of warheads as these eyes have ever seen. All coupled with a gum-chewing, airhead mentality. The perfect tour guide to the pulp of contemporary life. She is waiting for me in a room whose walls show as veins of a cream-colored mineral seaming a bedrock of posters, most depicting depraved-looking men with guitars.

"Frankiel" she squeals, coming to her knees and bouncing on the bed. "Where you been?"

"Sales trip," I say, shrugging off my jacket. Franklyn is, indeed, my Christian name, but I have told Serena that I'm a traveler in costume jewelry, and on each visit I present her with some bit of gaud as proof. From my trouser pocket I remove a pair of long rhinestone earrings that twist and twinkle like gemmy worms. Serena snatches them, holds them to ears, pulling back her hair to let me judge the effect ... a witchily beautiful effect. Good thing for you, Serena, that old Jeremy has not come in my stead.



Some hours later, lying face to face, still joined, I mention my problematic attraction to Marge Trombley. "Ya like her, huh?" she says.

"Like?" I mull over the quality of my feelings. "Let's say I'm drawn to something in her, something I can't quite fathom."

Serena gives me a chummy internal squeeze. "You're so sensitive, Frankie. I wish you was a younger guy."

This inspires me to prove that age has not entirely drained my vitality, and we do not continue the conversation for another hour.

"I don't know what to tell ya," she says. "What's she alla 'bout?"

I have little more than intuition to draw on as regards Marge's character, but I make a stab at analysis. "Quiet, conservative," I say. "On the surface, at least. Repressed. And that's the thing I want to know in her. Whatever's buried under those years of repression."

"And her husband beats her?"

"Habitually."

"Y'know," Serena says, "Sounds to me she ain't sure what she wants. I mean she is sure but she might need

convincin'. Like maybe gettin' beat up alla time ... well, she probably don't enjoy it or nothin'. But she's probably used to bein' forced."

"I don't understand."

"Yeah, you do," Serena squirms, and I respond, She giggles. "Ooh, I like that!"

"What were you going to say?"

"Bout what?"

"Marge ... convincin' her."

"See"—a crease mars Serena's brow, and her tone grows earnest, knowing—"she's gonna go right to the edge with ya, and then she's gonna need a push, y'know. To make her fall."

"A push?"

Serena laughs. "Y'gotta be masterful, Frankie. Y'know how to be masterful, don'tcha?"

On cue, I become masterful.

Between bouts with Serena, I wander the brothel. It, too, is a place of worship, one with a more comprehensible god than that scrap of darkness who inhabits St. Mary's and as such, I find its lessons apt. Standing in the gloomy corridor, listening to cries of pleasure both fraudulent and unfeigned, I remember my wife's cries of pain as the thing that ate her from within gnawed closer and closer to the quick. How I loved her, yet at the same time how I resented her unsightly dying. Sometimes I could scarcely determine whether my urge to put her out of her misery was funded by mercy or by an irrational murderous impulse. Those months of watching her die, of trying to soothe her agony, unhinged me, set me on a canted course from which I have not yet and perhaps never will recover ... Does it surprise you that I'm aware of my deviant sensibilities? Perhaps it is surprising; however, I've lived too long within my own cracked shell to be confounded by the eerie slants of light that penetrate and color thought. In any case, to be mad in this age is a form of wisdom, a lens through which one can view its oblique truths and gain knowledge by which to apply what is learned. So, though madder than most, I am also wiser, more capable of action, and the action, or rather the confluence of actions, that occurs to me while standing in the hallway strikes me as being the zenith of my mad wisdom. Why haven't I seen it before? It should have been obvious! Marge and our Saturday evening tryst, the compatible congregation of sin, Serena's advice, the traditions of the church, and on and on. Every-

(continued on page 68)





# WOLF/CHILD

*Through the dusky paths  
of the jungle  
a hungry darkness hunted.*

by Jane Yolen

ILLUSTRATION BY LINDA MIYAMOTO

**T**he sun was a red eye staring over the farthest hills when the she-wolf came back from the hunt. She ran easily into the jungle undergrowth on a path only she knew. As she entered the canopied sal forest, the tight lacings of leaves shut out the light. Shadows of shadows played along the tall branchless trunks of the trees.

The guinea fowl she carried in her mouth was still warm, though she had been almost an hour running with it. She had neither savaged nor eaten a portion. It was all for her cubs, the three who were ready to hunt on their own and the two light-colored hairless ones who still suckled though they had been with her through two litters already. There would be good eating tonight.

The she-wolf stopped twenty feet from her den, crouching low under a plum bush and measuring the warmth with her nose. The musky odor of tiger still lingered shoulder-high on the pipal trunk, but it was an old casting.

And there was no other danger riding the wind.

She looked around once, trusting her eyes only at the very last, and then she ran, crouched belly down, over to the beveled remains of the white ant mound. Slipping past another plum bush that all but obscured the entrance, she crawled down the twisting main passage, ignoring the smaller veins, to the central den. There, on the earth floor she had scratched and smoothed herself, were the waiting cubs.

The three weanlings greeted her arrival with open-mouthed smiles and stayed on their bellies, waiting for their shares of the meal. But the smallest of the hairless cubs crawled over and reached out for the bird with one pink paw.

The she-wolf dropped the bird and put her own paw on it, gently biting the hairless one on the top of the nose. At that, the cub seemed to shrink back into itself. It whined and,

# WOLF/ CHILD

mouth open, rolled over on its back. Its bare pink belly, streaked with dirt, moved rapidly up and down with each breath. It whimpered.

The she-wolf gave a sharp bark of ascent and the hairless cub rolled over on its stomach and sat up.

At the bark, the four other cubs came to her side. They watched, eyes shining with night-sight, as she gobbled down sections of the bird and chewed each piece thoroughly. Then she regurgitated back the soft pieces for each of them. The larger hairless cub gathered up several of the biggest sections and brought one over to its small twin.

Soon the only sound in the den far underground was that of chewing. The she-wolf gnawed on the small bones.

When the meal was finished, the she-wolf turned around three times before settling. When she lay down the three hairy cubs came to nuzzle at her side, but she pushed them away. They were ready to be weaned and it would not do for them to suck more. She had but a trickle of milk left and knew the cubs needed that slight edge of hunger to help them learn to hunt.

But the other cubs were different. Their sucking had never been as hard or as painful when the milkteeth had given way to the shaper incisors. They had never hurt her or fought their brothers for a place at the teat. Rather they waited until the others slept, moving them off the still-swollen milkbag with gentle pushes. Somehow, through three litters they had never nursed enough.

The she-wolf made room for the two hairless cubs to lie down by her side. The smaller cub nursed, patting the she-wolf with grimed paws. It gave soft bubbly sighs, a sound that had once seemed alien to the she-wolf but was now as familiar as the grunting sounds of the other cubs. She licked diffidently at the strange matting on the cub's head, all tangled and full of burrs. Each time she took the cubs outside, the matting was harder to clean. The she-wolf seemed to remember a time when the two had been completely without hair. But memory was not her way. She stopped licking after a while, lay back, closed

her eyes, and slept.

When the little cub finished nursing, the older one moved cautiously next to it, curled around it, and then fell asleep to dream formlessly in a succession of broken images.

"There is a *manush-bagha*, sahib," the small brown man said to the soldier sitting behind the desk. The native held his palms together while he spoke, less an attitude of prayer than one of fear. With his hands apart, the soldier would see how they trembled.

"What does he mean?" Turning to his subaltern, the man behind the desk

*The she-wolf made room for the two hairless cubs to lie down by her side. The smaller cub nursed, patting her with grimed paws, and gave a soft bubbly sigh.*

shook his head. "I can't understand these native dialects."

"A man-ghost, sir. It's a belief some of the more primitive forest tribes hold." The younger man smiled, hoping for approval from both the colonel and the native. "A *manush-bagha* can be the ghost of some dead native or..."

"By God, a revenant!" the colonel exclaimed. "I've always wanted to find one. My aunt was supposed to have one in her dressing room—the ghost of a maid who hanged herself. But she never manifested while I was there."

"... or, in some cases," the young soldier continued, "it can be dangerous." He paused. "Or so the natives believe."

"Better and better," murmured the colonel.

"They are eaters of flesh," the brown man said suddenly, hands still together, and eyes now wide.

"Eaters of *flesh*?" asked the colonel.

The native lowered his eyes quickly and said very quietly. "The *manush-bagha* eats human beings." After a beat, he added, "Sahib."

"Splendid!" said the colonel. "That caps it. We'll go." He turned to his subaltern. "Geoffrey, lay it on for tomorrow morning. I want beaters, the proper number of rifles, and maps. And get this one," he pointed to the brown-skinned man before him, "to give you precise directions. *Precise*." He stood. "Not that they know the meaning of the word." With a quick step he left the room, oblivious to his subaltern's snapped salute or the bow of the native or the long glance that followed between them.

The she-wolf listened to the soft breathing of her cubs and quietly moved away from them. She padded past the sleeping forms and wound her way through the tunnels of the white ant mound and out the second entrance to her den. In the darkening forest her gray-brown coat blended into the shadows.

Above in the sal canopy a colony of langurs, tails curled like question marks over their backs, scolded one another, loudly warning of her intrusion. She turned her head to look at them and they moved off together, leaping from branch to branch to branch. The branches swayed with their passage, but the trunks of the trees, mottled with gray and green lichens, never moved.

A covey of partridge flew up before her, a noisy exhalation. Two great butterflies floated by, just out of reach, their velvety black wings pumping gracefully, making no noise.

The she-wolf paused for a moment to watch the silent passage of the butterflies, then she turned to the east and was gone quickly into the underbrush.

When she returned to the den, over an hour later, she had another plump guinea hen in her mouth, one feather comically stuck to her nose. Tonight there would be good eating.

The colonel and his subaltern rode in the bullock cart, moving slowly through the forest. Hours before, they had left the neat, green rice swamps to cross the countryside towards the sal.

"A barren waste," the colonel said, dismissing the grayish land.

Geoffrey refrained from pointing to the herons that stalked along the single strand rivers or to remind the colonel of the low croaking of the hundreds of frogs. Not barren, he thought to himself, but with the different kind of richness. He said nothing.

The native guiding them told Geoffrey his name was Raman, though he had told the colonel, he was called Ramanritham. He walked ahead of the bullock cart to help lead the cranky beasts while the two hired carters went on ahead of them with axes. In this particular part of the sal forest vines grew up quickly across old pathways. Every day fresh routes had to be cut.

The swaying of the cart had a soporific effect on the colonel who nodded off, but Geoffrey refused to sleep. Being new to the sal, though he had read several books about it, he wanted to take it all in.

The canopy was so thick, it was hard to tell whether or not the sun was overhead, and the only light was a kind of filtered green. A magical sense of unpassed time possessed the young sunbaltern, and he drew in a deep breath. The sound of it joined the *racheta-racheta* of the stick that protruded from the empty kerosene can the carters had affixed under the wagon. As the stick struck the cart wheels it produced a steady noise which, the carters assured them, would frighten away any of the larger predators.

"Tigers do not like it, Sahib," the carter had said. Geoffrey hadn't liked it either. It seemed to violate the jungle's sanctity. But after a while, he stopped hearing it as a separate noise. At one point the path was so overgrown, the carters and Raman could barely cut their way through, and Geoffrey joined them, first stripping down to his vest. As his arm swung up and back with its axe, he noticed for the first time how white his own skin seemed next to theirs, though he had acquired a deep tan by Cambridge standards. But his arms looked somehow unnatural to him in the jungle setting.

At last they completed their task and stopped, all at once, to congratulate one another. At that very moment, Geoffrey heard the low cough of a tiger. He started back toward the cart where his gun rested against the wheel.

One of the carters called out to him. "It is very far away, Sahib, and you must not worry."

Geoffrey smiled his thanks and walked away from the three men in order to go down the path a little ways by himself. When he looked up, there was a peacock above him, on a swing of vine. He could remember nothing in England that had so moved him. He stood for a moment watching

it, then abruptly turned back. When he got to the cart the colonel was awake.

"For God's sake, man, put on your shirt. It won't do."

Geoffrey put on his shirt and climbed back up in the cart. The noise of the stick against the wheels began again, drowning out everything else.

The colonel was refreshed by his nap and showed it by his running commentary. "These natives," he said with a nod that took in both the carters who were city-bred and Raman, "are all so superstitious, Geoffrey. And timid. They have to be led by us or they'd get nothing done. But,



by God, if there is some kind of ghost I want to see it. That's not superstition. There are many odd things out here in the jungle. I could write it up. Major General Sleeman did that, you know. Field notes. About the oddities seen. It just takes an observant eye, my boy. I took a first at Oxford. What do you think, Geoffrey?"

But before Geoffrey could answer, the colonel continued, "Manushes. Man-eaters. Silly buggers. Probably only some kind of ape. But if it were some new sort of ape, that would be one for the books, now wouldn't it? A carnivorous ape. Probably that, rather than a ghost, though..." and his voice turned wistful, "I never did see my Aunt Evelyn's ghost. A maid, she was, got caught out by one of the sub-gardeners. Hanged herself in the pantry. Aunt Evelyn swears by her."

Geoffrey had fallen asleep.

The she-wolf stood by the entrance to the white ant mound and called softly. The cubs came out one by one. Overhead a slight breeze stirred the canopy of leaves, and green fruit pigeons called across the dusky clear-

ing, a soft, low sound.

The first cubs out were the three weanlings, sliding bellydown out through the entrance hole, and then stretching. The two hairless cubs crept out after, their light brown muzzle-faces peering around alertly. The she-wolf stalked over to her cubs and as if at a signal, they knelt before her, wagging their tails.

She gave a sharp high yip and they stood, following her out of the clearing. They went past the great mohua tree and into the tangled underbrush which closed behind them so quickly there was no sign that any creature had passed that way.

Raman held a sal leaf in his palm as they walked along. He said he could tell how much time had passed by the withering of the leaf. Geoffrey timed it with his pocket watch and was amazed at how accurate the little man's calculations were.

"And how long now until we get to your village?" Geoffrey asked.

Raman looked up at a stray ray of sun that had found itself through a tear in the canopy, then looked down at the leaf in his hand. "Before dark," he said.

Geoffrey repeated this to the colonel and told him about the withering leaf.

"Silly buggers," said the colonel. "What will they think of next to twist you, Geoffrey? Of course the man knows how long it takes to get to his village. The leaf is sheer flummery."

The she-wolf led the cubs to the edge of a clearing where a herd of reddish-brown chital grazed. One of the cubs, excited by the deer, yipped. At the sound, the herd ran off leaving a thick smoky cloud of dust behind.

The pack circled the clearing, five small shadows behind the she-wolf. At the southern end of the open area, she dropped suddenly to her stomach and the cubs did likewise.

As they watched, a strange noisy man-cart crossed the clearing, accompanied by a dreadful sound. *Racheta-racheta-racheta*. The pack did not move until long after the cart had passed. The she-wolf growled and her cubs crept beneath a pipal tree and waited, lying heads down on their front paws. Only when she was sure they would not leave the shelter of the tree did she check out the trail the bullock cart had left behind. There were deep ruts in the grass and the underbrush was broken. The smell of

(continued on page 72)

# DEAD MAN ON THE BEACH

*A shadow of their past was waiting  
out beyond the water's edge.*

by Richard Paul Russo

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID CELSI

W

e came across him at dusk, when the tide was going out. The body had washed up and stranded on a bar of sand and pebbles. He lay on his side, fully dressed, eyes open and milky white.

Jeanine stepped up the body, touched it with the toe of her boot. "Bastard!" she hissed. She swung her leg back and kicked him hard twice in the ribs rolling him onto his back. Karl's mouth hung open, as cold and dead as his eyes. "He should've drowned ten years ago," she said. "Saved us all a lot of grief." Maybe so, I thought.

I kept a distance from the two of them and looked up at the sand and rock cliffs, at the few scattered houses barely visible atop them. Lights were on in several, but not in mine. I dreaded the long climb up, half in sinking sand, half on slatted wooden steps to the back deck of the small house. Jeanine would be behind me, cursing him, talking about Karl as if he were still alive. The fog was slowly rolling in, muffling the crash of the waves. Jeanine kicked him again, this time in the side of the head. Christ.

"Come on," I said. "Let it be. We've got to call the police."

She didn't answer. She stood in silence, a dim silhouette in the grow-

ing darkness. I started walking through the sand toward the dark cliffs, and I thought of her phone call the night before, when she had asked to come and stay with me for a while. She had sounded ready to fall apart, had said she could not take Karl any more. And now this, finding him. For a moment I thought she might remain on the beach with Karl's body, but after a minute or so she followed, and we began the long ascent to the house.

By the time the police arrived, three of them in two cars, it was completely dark and we went down to the beach with flashlights. Karl's body was gone.

We spent half an hour walking up and down the stretch of beach—Jeanine and I and the police—but we could find no signs of him.

"Are you sure he was dead?" one of the policemen asked.

"I'm sure," Jeanine told him.

"And you're sure it was your husband?"

"I know what my husband looks like."

"Are you certain you even saw a body?" another asked.

I didn't like the accusing tone of his voice, and neither of us answered. He and the first officer made a few

cracks about the dead bodies walking away, and people imagining things. The third policeman finally told them to let it go, and we walked up and down along the water for another ten minutes, searching. Finally we all went back up to the house.

Over coffee, we told them what we knew, which was practically nothing: that it was Karl, that he was fully dressed, and that he was very definitely dead. Neither of us had seen him for several days and we hadn't known he was anywhere in the area. The police seemed dissatisfied with some of our answers, almost suspicious, but they didn't push it. At last, after nine o'clock, they left.

Jeanine had managed to stay sober while the police were here, but now that we were alone she started drinking screwdrivers, one after another in a steady succession. She was not a drinker, so by ten-thirty she was pretty well smashed.

I knew what her problem was with Karl's death, but I couldn't do anything about it. She just didn't know what to feel. Karl had been a bastard, there was no getting around that. He and Jeanine had been married eleven years, and it wasn't much good between them after the first. I had





# BEACH

known them both before they were married, had been close to each of them; I had watched the marriage change them, bring out traits I had never seen before. I had watched everything go slowly but steadily to hell.

Karl had one affair after another and he always made sure Jeanine knew about them and made sure I knew about his affair with Melinda. Sometimes he would disappear for weeks at a time without a word to Jeanine. He avoided sex when she was willing, forced it on her when she wasn't. Problem was, she never stopped loving him. She wanted a divorce, but when he said no, she was unwilling to fight it. Part of her always hoped it would get better, I think. Through everything she still loved him, and hated him for the fact that he felt nothing at all for her but contempt and a fanatic desire to possess her.

Around eleven, she started crying, and I couldn't understand a word she tried to say to me. I sat and listened, and put off her feeble attempts to pull me back into the bedroom. Just before midnight, she started throwing up. Afterwards she was much quieter, subdued. I helped her into the bedroom, undressed her, and slid her in between the sheets of the bed.

"He was dead, wasn't he?" she asked, eyes almost closed.

"He was dead." A shiver ran through me, a flash that somehow I was identifying with him. I didn't know why I would, and that scared me. I pulled a blanket over Jeanine and went back out to the front room.

I stayed awake for another hour, thinking about Karl. His death didn't make me feel any different about Melinda; the walls blocking out the pain remained. I wondered how he had drowned, what he was doing out in the ocean to begin with. I hoped the police would have some answers, because I was uncomfortable with the uncertainties. Finally I turned out all the lights in the house, double-checked the locks on the doors, and went to sleep on the sofa, still dressed.

Morning came with gray silence. From the sofa I could see through the sliding glass door, could see the heavy, pale fog drifting past,

smoky tendrils caressing the redwood chairs out on the small deck. I got up and put on boots and a heavy flannel shirt.

I looked in on Jeanine. Twice in the night she had cried out, from nightmares perhaps. Both times she was still asleep when I went in to see her, though she tossed and made quiet noises. Now the curtains were open, letting in enough gray light for me to see. The covers were pushed down to her waist and she lay on her back, arms wrapped about each other. Her eyes were closed, her mouth open. Strands of hair stuck to her cheek and nose. I remembered seeing her like

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fog drifted back.*

that years before, lying on the beach asleep, Karl next to her, their arms just barely touching. I walked in, pulled the covers up and over her. She turned over on her side, moaned but didn't wake.

I put on my coat and walked out on the deck into the cold morning air. The fog was thick enough so my face was soon damp, but thin enough so that, when I stood at the deck railing and looked down the cliffs and out toward the sea, I could occasionally see the white foam of waves breaking on the shore. Even the sound of the waves reached me only sporadically, as though the slight breeze kept carrying it away.

The fog cleared for a moment, and I thought I saw a dark object out beyond the waves, bobbing gently with the swells. A seal, perhaps. Or, thinking of Karl, a body. Then the fog drifted back, obscuring my view. A few minutes later, when it cleared again, there was nothing to be seen.

I realized then that, in some ways, I was glad Karl was dead. I pictured him with Melinda, the two of them locked together in her bed with

my photograph on the nightstand beside them. The images didn't hurt as much as they used to. Enough time had passed, I'd built up the walls. I didn't think much about her anymore.

A gust of fog and wind blew past me and I shivered. With another glance at the empty sea, I went back inside.

I checked on Jeanine again after a while, but she was still asleep. I decided to go for an early swim.

The beach was deserted except for a solitary gull pecking at a clump of cold seaweed. I put the towels and blanket on the dry sand high above the water and undressed. Down to just my trunks, I began to shiver and ran toward the water, feet sinking at first in the dry, soft sand, then pounding across the hard wet pack as I got closer. Before I reached the sea I crossed the bar where we'd found Karl, and I felt the cold stones on my bare feet.

I hit the water, tried to ignore the freezing cold and continued running. I dove into the face of a small wave, surfaced behind it, and began stroking my way out to open sea.

I swam fast and hard, my body eager to move in an effort to keep warm. Larger waves broke over me, slowed but never stopped my progress. Within minutes I was beyond the breakline and swimming easily. At last I stopped and turned over onto my back, looking up at the gray sky now growing lighter. The fog was beginning to dissipate.

There was nothing to see above or around me, and I slowly rose and fell with the incoming swells. I thought of Jeanine, now sleeping back at the house, who would wake with a terrific hangover, confused and angry and hurt. Probably Karl deserved to die, but what had killed him? Or who?

Something cold, ice cold and soft, brushed my calf. I jerked my legs under me without thinking and treaded water. A fish? Then my foot hit solid cold again, sliding off it with the slightest feeling of slime. My breath stuttered for a moment and a flash of adrenaline arced through me. I turned onto my stomach and started in toward shore. With my first kick, my foot hit something hard and cold a third time. I stroked frantically at the water with my arms.

I'd been in icy water a long time now, and my breath was short and fast; my muscles were on the verge of cramping. I sensed the need to relax, swim in slowly so I could make it

without drowning, but the thought of what I'd touched kept me pushing as fast as I could move.

The swells grew larger, then one began to crest just behind me. I stroked hard, rising, trying to stay ahead. The wave crested and I plunged down the face. It broke over me, driving me down through the water, down until I hit bottom. I was pressed against sand and rock, tumbled, then the water passed over me and the swirling ceased.

I righted myself before the undertow started pulling me back, stood up in waist-deep water, and sucked in the cold salt air. I walked slowly the rest of the way in, stumbling, numb everywhere, even in my thoughts. I was only vaguely aware of how exhausted I was, how cold.

I looked down and saw blood oozing from a shallow cut in my knee. I felt thin pain through the numbing cold, and welcomed it with the blood. I breathed deeply and walked up toward the towels and my clothing.

Jeanine was up when I got back to the house. Dressed in a pale blue robe, eyes half closed, she sat at the kitchen table, an empty coffee mug cupped in her hands. Water was heating on the stove. She looked up when I walked in, but didn't try to open her eyes any wider.

"Instant all you have?" Her voice was tired, hoarse.

I nodded.

"Cold for a swim, isn't it?"

I shrugged.

"You're talkative this morning."

The water started boiling. Jeanine got up and I walked out of the kitchen and into the bathroom.

I stayed in the hot shower for nearly half an hour. Eventually my skin began to feel warm, but I could not get rid of the hard chill that had worked its way into my bones. I told myself it was psychological, emotional, but that didn't stop the numbing ache in my body.

In the kitchen, Jeanine was drinking coffee, and looked at me through the steam rising from the mug. A bottle of Seagrams V.O. was on the table in front of her.

"Hair of the dog," she said. Her eyes were fully open now. "I'm not sure it's worth it." She leaned back in the chair, slumped.

"Do you want breakfast?" I asked.

"Suppose I should. Why did you go swimming?"

"I'll make French toast, if that's all right."

"That's fine." She sighed. "What's bothering you?"

I started on breakfast. Jeanine made a sound in her throat, then was silent. When I finished cooking, I put the French toast on plates and sat across from her. She ate slowly; her thoughts seemed to be elsewhere, and she stared out the kitchen window, eyes unfocused.

"What do you think killed him?" I asked.

Jeanine closed her eyes, became motionless for a few moments. "He drowned. It's obvious."

"No," I said. "It's not obvious. Someone might have killed him, thrown



him in the water. There were certainly enough people who hated him."

She dropped her fork onto the plate with a piece still on it, opened her eyes and turned to me. "Look, who cares? He's dead now, what does it matter how he died?" Her voice was strained, her jaw muscles tight.

"It matters to me."

"It doesn't matter to me. And how should I know what happened to him? His body's even disappeared, hopefully for good, and I'm ... just ... glad ... he's dead." She looked at me a few moments, shaking slightly, then dropped her head into her hands and began to cry.

The police came by late in the afternoon. The body had not been found yet. They had more questions about Karl, how we found the body; what might have happened. A lot of questions they'd asked the first time. Had he been depressed lately? Had he recently talked of suicide? Then the questions became more pointed. Why was Jeanine here? What was our relationship? Where were each of us the day before we'd found the body? And

so on. Again, they were dissatisfied, more openly so this time. But what could they say? There was no body, no way to know how he'd died. Eventually they focused on Jeanine alone, and I went out onto the deck. A cool breeze blew past, but the sky was clear and the sun was out. There were no signs yet of the fog that would roll in later in the evening.

Reflections of the sun flickered up from the water, turning and flipping with the movement of the waves. Again, for a few moments, I thought I saw something dark bobbing out just beyond the breakline. Too big for a gull. The reflections made it difficult to see anything, and I lost sight of it, glimpsed it again for another few seconds, then it disappeared for good. I stayed against the wooden railing for ten, fifteen minutes, watching, but didn't see it again.

Was I imagining it? If so, why? Damn Karl, why was his death disturbing me so much? Was it possible Jeanine had ...? No, I didn't want to think about that. Not that I would blame her. But standing there on the deck, watching the ocean and the lines of waves rolling in, the white of the chopping crests, it suddenly seemed very important to find Karl's body, to learn, finally, what exactly had happened to him.

The door slid open. Jeanine came out and stood next to me.

"They're gone," she said. Her voice was flat. "Why won't they leave me alone? Why do they think I ...? Her voice trailed off. "Where is he?" she asked.

I didn't have an answer for her.

It was early evening that same day, and I lay on the sofa, watching the fog roll past the window. Jeanine surprisingly, had gone for a walk alone, and hadn't yet returned. She'd said she needed time to think. I heard my name being called, very quiet and distant. After a few seconds it was repeated, but no closer or louder. I went out onto the deck and looked down the steps to the beach. At the bottom of the stairway, Jeanine, barely visible, slowly waved her arms. It was obvious she wasn't going to come up, so I went back inside, put on my coat, grabbed a flashlight, and headed down the steps.

When I got to the bottom, Jeanine was sitting in the sand, hugging herself. She wasn't wearing a coat. Her hair was damp from the fog, and her face was almost void of

(continued on page 75)

# HALLEY'S PASSING

*The crimson circle of his days was  
captured in a small black book.*

by Michael McDowell

ILLUSTRATION BY DARRYL LIGASAN

**W**ould you like to keep that on your credit card?" asked the woman on the desk. Her name was Donna and she was dressed like Show White because it was Halloween.

"No," said Mr. Farley. "I think I'll pay cash." Mr. Farley counted out twelve ten-dollar bills and laid them on the counter. Donna made sure there were twelve, then gave Mr. Farley change of three dollars and twenty-six cents. He watched to make certain she tore up the charge slips he had filled out two days before. She ripped them into thirds. Original copy, Customer's Receipt, Bank Copy, two intervening carbons—all bearing the impress of Mr. Farley's Visa card and his signature—they went into a trash basket that was invisible beneath the counter.

"Good-bye," said Mr. Farley. He took up his one small suitcase and walked out the front door of the hotel. His suitcase was light blue Samsonite with an X of tape underneath the handle to make it recognizable at an airport baggage claim.

It was seven o'clock. Mr. Farley took a taxi from the hotel to the airport. In the back of the taxi, he opened his case and took out a black loose-leaf notebook and wrote in it:

10385 Double Tree Inn  
Dallas, Texas  
Checkout 1900/\$116.74/  
Donna

The taxi took Mr. Farley to the airport and cost him \$12.50 with a tip that was generous but not too generous.

Mr. Farley went to the PSA counter and picked up an airline schedule and put it into the pocket of his jacket. Then he went to the Eastern counter and picked up another schedule. In a bar called the Range Room he sat at a small round table. He ordered a vodka martini from a waitress named Alyce. When she had brought it to him, and he had paid her and she had gone away, he opened his suitcase, pulled out his black loose-leaf notebook and added the notations:

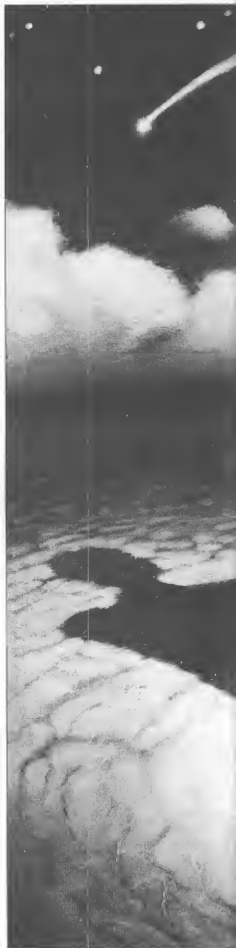
Taxi \$10.20 + 2.30/#1718  
Drink at Airport Bar  
\$2.75 + .75/Alyce

He leafed backwards through the notebook and discovered that he had flown PSA three times in the past two months. Therefore he looked into the Eastern Schedule first. He looked on page 23 first because \$2.30 had been the amount of the tip to the taxi driver. On page 23 of the Eastern airline schedule were flights from Dallas to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Mobile, Alabama. All of the flights to Milwaukee changed in Cincinnati or St. Louis. A direct flight to Mobile left at 9:10 p.m. arriving 10:50 p.m. Mr. Farley returned the black loose-leaf notebook to his case and got up from the table, spilling his drink in the process.

"I'm very sorry," he said to Alyce, and left another dollar bill for her inconvenience.

"That's all right," said Alyce.

Mr. Farley went to the Eastern ticket counter and bought a coach





# HALLEY'S

ticket to Mobile, Alabama. He asked for an aisle seat in the non-smoking section. He paid in cash and after taking out his black looseleaf notebook, he checked his blue Samsonite bag. He went through security, momentarily surrendering a ringful of keys. The flight to Mobile departed Gate 15 but Mr. Farley sat in the seats allotted to Gate 13, directly across the way. He read through a copy of *USA Today* and he gave a Snickers bar to a child in a pumpkin costume who trick-or-treated him. He smiled at the child, not because he liked costumes or Halloween or children, but because he was pleased with himself for having been foresightful enough to buy three Snickers bars just in case he ran into trick-or-treating children on Halloween night. He opened his black looseleaf notebook and amended the notation of his most recent bar tab:

*Drink at Airport Bar  
\$2.75+ 1.75/Alyce*

The flight for Mobile began boarding at 8:55, as the announcement was made for the early accommodation of those with young children or other difficulties. Mr. Farley went into the men's room.

A Latino man in his twenties with a blue shirt and a lock of hair dangling down his neck stood at a urinal, looking at the ceiling and softly farting. His urine splashed against the porcelain wall of the urinal. Mr. Farley went past the urinals and stood in front of the two stalls and peered under them. He saw no legs or feet or shoes but he took the precaution of opening the doors. The stalls were empty, as he suspected, but Mr. Farley did not like to leave such matters to chance. The Latino man, looking downwards, flushed the urinal, zipping his trousers and backing away at the same time. Mr. Farley leaned down and took the Latino man by the waist. He swung the Latino man around so that he was facing the mirrors and the two sinks in the restroom and could see Mr. Farley's face.

"Man—" protested the Latino man.

Mr. Farley rolled his left arm around the Latino man's belt and put his right hand on the Latino man's

head. Mr. Farley pushed forward very swiftly with his right hand. The Latino man's head went straight down towards the sink in such a way that the cold-water faucet, shaped like a Maltese Cross, shattered the bone above the Latino man's right eye. Mr. Farley had gauged the strength of his attack so that the single blow served to press the Latino's head all the way down to the porcelain. The chilled aluminum faucet was buried deeply in the Latino man's brain. Mr. Farley took the Latino man's wallet from his back pocket, removed the cash and his Social Security card. He gently dropped the wallet into the sink beneath the

*He gently dropped  
the wallet into  
the sink beneath  
the man's head  
and turned on the  
hot water. He  
peered into the  
sink and saw  
blood swirling  
into the drain.*

Latino man's head and turned on the hot water. Mr. Farley peered into the sink, and saw blood, blackish and brackish swirling into the rusting drain. Retrieving his black looseleaf notebook from the edge of the left hand sink where he'd left it, Mr. Farley walked out of the restroom. The Eastern flight to Mobile was boarding all seats and Mr. Farley walked on directly behind a young woman with brown hair and a green scarf and directly in front of a young woman with slightly darker brown hair in a yellow sweater-dress. Mr. Farley sat in Seat 4-C and next to him, in Seat 4-A, was a bearded man in a blue corduroy jacket who fell asleep before take-off. Mr. Farley reached into his pocket and pulled out the bills he'd taken from the Latino man's wallet. There were five five-dollar bills and nine one-dollar bills. Mr. Farley pulled out his own wallet and interleaved the Latino man's bills with his own, mixing them up. Mr. Farley reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out the Latino man's Social Security card, cupping it from sight and slipping it into the Eastern Airlines In-Flight Magazine. He turned

on the reading light and opened the magazine. The Social Security card read:

IGNACIOS LAZO  
424-70-4063

Mr. Farley slipped the Social Security card back into his shirt pocket. He exchanged the in-flight magazine for the black loose-leaf notebook in the seat back pocket. He held the notebook in his lap for several minutes while he watched the man in the blue corduroy jacket next to him, timing his breaths by the sweep second hand on his watch. The man seemed genuinely to be asleep. Mr. Farley declined a beverage from the stewardess, who did not wear a name tag, and put his finger to his lips with a smile to indicate that the man in the blue corduroy jacket was sleeping and probably wouldn't want to be disturbed. When the beverage cart was one row behind and conveniently blocking the aisle so that no one could look over his shoulder as he wrote, Mr. Farley opened the black loose-leaf notebook on his lap, and completed the entry for Halloween:

*2155/Ignacios Lazo/c  
27/Dallas Texas/ Airport/  
RR/38/Head onto Faucet*

RR meant Rest Room, and Mr. Farley stared at the abbreviation for a few moments, wondering whether he shouldn't write out the words. There was a time when he had been a good deal given to abbreviations, but once, in looking over his book for a distant year, he had come across the notation CRB, and had had no idea what that stood for. Mr. Farley since that time had been careful about his notations. It didn't do to forget things. If you forgot things, you might repeat them. And if you inadvertently fell into a repetitious pattern—well then, you just might get into trouble.

Mr. Farley got up and went into the rest room at the forward end of the passenger cabin. He burned Ignacios Lazo's Social Security card, igniting it with a match torn from a book he had picked up at the casino at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas. He waited in the rest room till he could no longer smell the nitrate in the air from the burned match, then flushed the toilet, washed his hands, and returned to his seat.

The flight arrived in Mobile at three minutes past eleven. While waiting for his blue Samsonite bag, Mr. Farley went to a Yellow Pages telephone directory for Mobile. His flight

from Dallas had been Eastern Flight No. 71, but Mr. Farley was not certain there would be that many hotels and motels in Mobile Alabama so he decided on number 36, which was half of 72 (the closest even number to 71). Mr. Farley turned to the pages advertising hotels and counted down thirty-six to the Oasis Hotel. He telephoned and found a room was available for fifty-six dollars. He asked what the cab fare from the airport would be and discovered it would be about twelve dollars, with tip. The reservations clerk asked for Mr. Farley's name, and Mr. Farley, looking down at the credit card in his hand, said, "Mr. T.L. Rachman." He spelled it for the clerk.

Mr. Rachman claimed his bag, and went outside for a taxi. He was first in line, and by 11:30 he had arrived at the Oasis Hotel, downtown in Mobile. In the hotel's Shore Room Lounge, a band was playing in Halloween costume. The clerk on the hotel desk was made up to look like a mummy.

"You go to a lot of trouble here for holidays, I guess," said Mr. Rachman pleasantly.

"Anything for a little change," said the clerk as he pressed Mr. Rachman's MasterCard against three copies of a voucher. Mr. Rachman signed his name on the topmost voucher and took back the card. Clerks never checked signatures at this point, and they never checked them later either, but Mr. Rachman's had a practiced hand, at least when it came to imitating a signature.

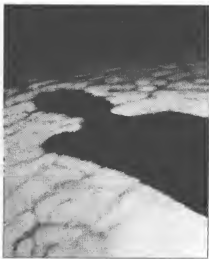
Mr. Rachman's room was on the fifth and topmost floor, and enjoyed a view down to the street. Mr. Rachman unpacked his small bag, carefully hanging his extra pair of trousers and his extra jacket. He set his extra pair of shoes, with trees inside, into the closet beneath the trousers and jacket. He placed his two laundered shirts inside the topmost bureau drawer, set his little carved box containing an extra watch and two pairs of cufflinks and a tie clip and extra pairs of brown and black shoelaces on top of the bureau, and set his toiletries case next to the sink in the bathroom. He opened his black loose-leaf notebook and though it was not yet midnight, he began the entry for 110185, beneath which he noted:

110185 Eastern 71 Dallas-Mobile  
Taxi \$9.80 + 1.70  
Oasis Hotel/4th St  
T.L. Rachman

In the bathroom, Mr. Rachman took

scissors and cut up the Visa card bearing the name Thomas Farley, and flushed away the pieces. He went down to the lobby and went into the Shore Room Lounge and sat at the bar. He ordered a vodka martini and listened to the band. When the bartender went away to the rest room, Mr. Rachman poured his vodka martini into a basin of ice behind the bar. When the bartender returned, Mr. Rachman ordered another vodka martini.

The cocktail lounge—and every other bar in Mobile—closed at 1 a.m. Mr. Rachman returned to his room, and without ever turning on the light,



he sat at his window and looked out into the street. After the laundry truck had arrived, unloaded, and driven off from the service entrance of the Hotel Oasis, Mr. Rachman retreated from the window. It was 4:37 on the morning of the first of November, 1985. Mr. Rachman pulled the shade and drew the curtains. Towards noon, when the maid came to make up the room, Mr. Rachman called out from the bathroom, "I'm taking a bath."

"I'll come back later," the maid called back.

"That's all right," Mr. Rachman said loudly. "Just leave a couple of fresh towels on the bed." He sat on the tile floor and ran his unsleeved arm up and down through the filled tub, making splashing noises.

Mr. Rachman counted his money at sundown. He had four hundred fifty-eight dollars in cash. With all of it in his pocket, Mr. Rachman walked around the block to get his bearings. He had been in Mobile before, but he didn't remember exactly when. Mr. Rachman had his shoes shined in the lobby of a hotel that

wasn't the one he was staying in. When he was done, he paid the shoeshine boy seventy-five cents and a quarter tip, and got into the elevator behind a businessman who was carrying a briefcase. The businessman with the briefcase got off on the fourth floor, and just as the doors of the elevator were closing Mr. Rachman startled and said, "Oh this is my floor, too," and jumped off behind the businessman with the briefcase. Mr. Rachman put his hand into his pocket, and jingled his loose change as if he were looking for his room key. The businessman with the briefcase put down his briefcase beside Room 419 and fumbled in his pocket for his own room key. Mr. Rachman stopped and patted all the pockets of his jacket and trousers. "Did I leave it at the desk?" he murmured to himself. The businessman with the briefcase put the key into the lock of Room 419, and smiled a smile that said to Mr. Rachman, *It happens to me all the time, too.* Mr. Rachman smiled a small embarrassed smile, and said, "I sure hope I left it at the desk," and turned and started back down the hall past the businessman with the briefcase.

The businessman and his briefcase were already inside of Room 419 and the door was beginning to shut when Mr. Rachman suddenly changed direction in the hallway and pushed the door open.

"Hey," said the businessman. He held his briefcase up protectively before him. Mr. Rachman shut the door quietly behind him. Room 419 was a much nicer room than his own, though he didn't care for the painting above the bed. Mr. Rachman smiled, though, for the businessman was alone and that was always easier. Mr. Rachman pushed the businessman down on the bed and grabbed the briefcase away from him. The businessman reached for the telephone. The red light was blinking on the telephone telling the businessman he had a message at the desk. Mr. Rachman held the briefcase high above his head and then brought it down hard, giving a little twist to his wrist just at the last so that a corner of the rugged leather case smashed against the bridge of the businessman's nose, breaking it. The businessman gaped, and fell sideways on the bed. Mr. Rachman raised the case again and brought the side of it down against the businessman's cheek with such force that the handle of the case broke off in his hand and the businessman's cheekbones were splin-

(continued on page 78)

# THE BOYS IN THE RAIN

*Their dim shapes danced  
in the darkness, like raindrops  
on the windowpane*

by Pat Cadigan

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID DIRCKS

They're out there again," Delia said.

"Who?" asked Joe, turning a page in the book he was reading.

"Those boys. They're out in the rain again." She touched her index finger to the chill window as though to blot the raindrops on the other side. There was a small halo of fog when she took her finger away.

"So they're out in the rain. Some people don't have sense enough to come in out of the rain and there's the proof."

Delia fidgeted with a button on her baggy sweater. "It's so sad, though. Seeing them down there in the street like that."

"So don't look."

She grimaced over her shoulder at him. "Joe, what if they don't have homes to go to?"

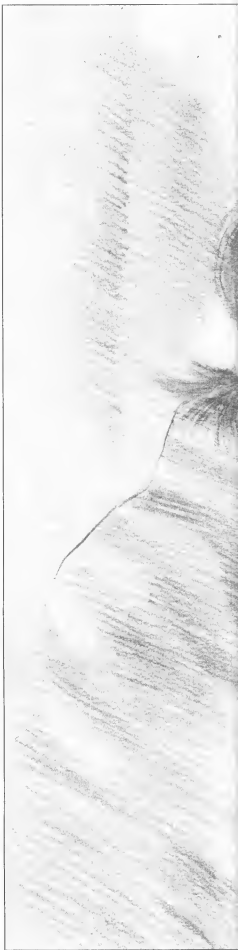
Joe shifted position slightly on the couch, bracing his bare feet more firmly against the arm and didn't look up from his book. "They must go somewhere, since they aren't there all

the time."

Delia turned back to the window. It was one of three in the little alcove that stuck out from the rest of the building just enough to give her a view of the whole street. Marks on the woodwork showed where a windowseat had once been. When they had taken the apartment, she and Joe had talked about having another windowseat put in over the scars of the old, but that had been a year ago. Now neither of them mentioned it any more. She knew Joe would be against the idea—*Why give the robbers who own this place free added value?* he'd say. *They won't give us a break on the rent and they'll jack it way the hell up on the next people to live here after we leave.* The trouble with knowing someone really well, she thought, was that ninety percent of any discussions were finished before they were started.

"Are you going to stand there and watch those boys all night?" he asked.

"I might."







# RAIN

He sighed noisily but didn't say anything else. Delia pulled the sweater more tightly around her. It was a cold spring this year. Cold and wet and melancholy. She found herself passing the days wrapped in a sweater or her afghan (the result of her one burst of artsy-craftsiness in college), eating bottles of sinus headache remedy like mints and wading through a vague, free-floating disappointment. The last of the winter blahs, she told herself. Once the weather warmed up, she'd snap out of it. By contrast, Joe was unaffected by things like weather. He seldom got depressed for any reason and he didn't waste any anxiety on something as far removed from his life as a group of teenaged boys in the rain.

She couldn't remember exactly when she had first noticed them. It had been some time before the last snow, a half-hearted storm that had turned to rain and then fizzled out. They'd been down there at the bus stop that night just as they were now, idly hanging around the sign, standing on the curb, sitting on the back of the bench with their feet on the seat and then jumping off again. They were always shifting about, the way people did when there was nothing to do and nowhere to go.

Delia was uncertain of precisely how many there were. The bench was in the shadow of another building, away from the streetlamps and she could see only their forms when they sat on it. Sometimes they seemed to blend together or divide so that, watching, she would realize she was seeing one where she thought there had been three or two where she'd thought there'd been only one. They melted in and out of the darkness, distinct only when they were near the bus stop sign where the streetlamps cut them into the definite shapes of boys. There couldn't have been more than eight of them, she decided, and no less than four. Six or seven, then, and she had become so familiar with their postures and movements that she was sure they were the same six or seven every night. Every rainy night—they didn't show up on clear nights. Peculiar. Why only rainy nights? It should have been the other

way around.

"Delia." Now she heard Joe put the book down. "Do you really intend just to stand there all night?"

She shrugged. "There's nothing else to do."

"For God's sake, turn on the TV if you want, read a book or something." He paused, waiting for her to move away from the window. When she didn't, he said, "If you stay there, they're going to think you want to invite them up. I'm sure they've already noticed you watching them."

"From seven storeys up, they can't tell who I am."

"Don't be so sure. You could be

---

*She could almost  
make out their  
faces, pale as  
streetlights,  
anonymous, too  
hard for children,  
too unfinished  
for adults,  
almost too cold  
to be human.*

---

coming home from work some night and find those little bastards have arranged a reception for you."

One of them stumbled and fell off the curb into the gutter. Delia flinched, holding her breath till he got up again, wiping himself off. He limped around the others, exaggerating the movement comically. Just boys. Just kids playing in the rain. "What can their families be thinking of?" she said aloud.

Joe grunted, got up and put on the radio. "Damn it, will you come away from there? And don't complain there's nothing to do. I offered to take you to a movie earlier."

"It's Saturday night. All the theaters are packed," she said over the longingly high voice of a singer who moaned that he'd been waiting for a girl like her to come into his life.

"Big deal. It's a crowded world and getting more crowded. You ought to be used to it by now."

"Sitting shoulder to shoulder in the dark with a lot of strangers isn't my idea of a good time."

"No, you'd rather watch strangers hang out in the rain. Honest to God,

Delia, you're turning into some kind of cranky old lady."

"I am not." She rubbed her arms briskly with irritation and moved away from the window. Joe sat down on the couch again, watching her as she wandered over to the bookshelf.

"You don't want to go out but you're restless, aren't you?"

"I don't know what I am."

"Yeah, you're restless. And cranky and fussy because of it."

Delia made a face, pulled a book out at random and plumped down on the old green easychair.

"And now you're mad at me."

"I'm not mad. At anyone." She opened the book and looked down her nose at it.

"Then talk to me."

She rested her against the back of the chair. "I don't know what I am," she said again.

"Well, I do. You're moody as hell is what you are." He gave her a wry, lopsided smile before he put his feet up and opened his own book again. Disc jockey patter flowed into the gulf between them, filling it with snappy complaints about the exceptionally rainy spring they were having. Delia stared at the ceiling. Decades of replastering had made it uneven and lumpy, as thought it were the topographical map of some alien terrain turned upside-down and hanging over their heads. Joe had assured her it wouldn't fall in; so far, he'd been right. She took a deep breath and let it out slowly, feeling herself sink deeper into—the last of the winter blahs? No, it seemed like something else now. She moved her head slightly, so that Joe was in her peripheral vision. The lamplight gave his brown hair honey-colored overtones.

Delia and Joe at home, home and dry. Dry. Her gaze roamed over the ceiling again, the book in her lap forgotten. The boys in the rain appeared in her mind's eye. The street gleamed wetly, reflecting the light from the streetlamps as cold white blobs, making the boys seem more like moving holes of darkness, darker than the darkness swimming before her unblinking eyes. They stood at the curb in accidental formation with their toes over the gutter, rocking back and forth. Just kids out playing in the rain. How could they stand to be cold and wet for so long? Was their hair plastered to their heads, the rain running down their faces and necks? Were they chilled to the point of numbness? In her mental image, the impromptu line suddenly turned and looked up at

the window. Now she could almost make out some of their faces, pale as the streetlights, expressionless, anonymous, too hard for children, too unfinished for adults, almost too cold to be human, no adolescent charm, none at all. Washed away in the rain, she thought.

The one farthest away from her vanished. He dissolved into the shadows so completely and quickly that she wasn't sure he had been there at all. And then the whole waking dream itself dissolved into the white of the ceiling. Delia blinked her watering eyes.

"Want to go to bed?"

She looked over at Joe, raising her eyebrows at him. "Huh?"

"You were snoring."

"Was I?" She sighed. Of course he meant go to sleep.

"Like a soldier." He closed the book with a snap. "What do you say?"

"I'm not really sleepy."

Joe laughed briefly. "Right. I forgot. You don't know what you are. Maybe there's something good on the late movie you could sit up and watch, then. I'll even let you eat potato chips in bed if you want."

She gazed at the empty alcove. From where she was sitting, she couldn't see out the window that looked down on the bus stop. If she got up and went to it now, what would the boys be doing?

"Come on," Joe said. He shut off the radio and pulled her out of the chair. She let him take her to the bedroom and then slipped out of his arm at the doorway.

"I want to get a drink of water," she said.

"Turn off the lights in the living room, then. And bring the potato chips back with you." He began peeling off his clothes casually, letting them drop on the floor.

She ran the water in the kitchen and took the potato chips out of the cabinet before she turned off the living room lights. The rain had stopped and the boys were gone.

A crash of thunder woke her. Rain splattered against the window like sloppy machine gun fire. She sat up in bed, pulling the covers up around herself. In his sleep, Joe tugged at the blankets, rolling over. Delia put a hand on his ribs. His skin was pleasantly warm. Dry. She thought about cuddling up to him and letting his body heat lull her back to sleep. Thunder crashed again, followed by several quick flashes of lightning. She slid out of bed, groping for her bathrobe. Joe

began to snore faintly. He could sleep through a thermonuclear war and wake relaxed and refreshed. Ignoring the coldness of the floor, she padded barefoot to the living room.

Instead of going directly to the window, she sat down on the sofa and listened to the storm. Five years ago, she could not have believed herself capable of sitting in the dark in the middle of the night doing nothing at all. She had never been particularly fond of the dark; Joe had often teased her about her insistence on turning on the lights as she went from one room to another at night. But waking in the middle of the night was different. It



was waking to native country; to turn on a light now would have been wrong and artificial. Anyway, there was just enough indirect light from the street-lamps for her to see by.

She found Joe's cigarettes in the drawer of one of the endtables and lit one. She'd quit smoking about a year after they had moved in together. Joe didn't really have a habit. He used cigarettes the way some people had an occasional drink after dinner. Very under-control guy, that Joe. She wondered why she couldn't be the same. Some people just seemed born to steer themselves through life while others were swept or pushed or carried along, having things happen to them. She admitted she was in the latter group only at this hour of the morning—whatever hour it was, two, three, maybe even four a.m. To be merely mortal was out of fashion. These were the days of the goal-directed, the success-oriented, the self-actualized, the strictly disciplined, all appetites and weaknesses controlled, or at least dealt with. All acts were now gotten together, cleaned up, bad habits like cigarettes or cocaine kicked and you

were responsible for your own life, you made it happen, you were to thank or to blame for yourself. So she could thank or blame herself for sitting in a dark room in the middle of the night, indulging in a habit she had supposedly given up two years before.

She put the cigarette out in the ashtray by the lamp and stood up. The alcove was a patchy limbo of dim light and shadow. And down in the street—had the boys returned, now that it was raining again? Thunder rumbled and the windows rattled in sympathy as lightning flickered. She got up and took three steps toward the alcove and then paused, balancing on the ball of her left foot. Under the sound of car passing, its tires whispering wetly, came the creak of the mattress springs as Joe turned over. She hurried back to the bedroom. If he should have awakened and found her at the window, she would never have heard the end of it.

The storm intensified, keeping her from deep sleep. For what might have been hours, she dozed with the image of the rainslick street and the boys appearing and disappearing in her dreams.

Sunlight poured through the window over the kitchen sink, flowed across the table and spilled onto the worn linoleum. It seemed thin and pale and out of place. Delia's eyes watered to look at it.

"I don't think I'm used to waking up to a day that isn't overcast," she said tiredly to Joe.

"Uh-huh," he said, cracking the newspaper.

She paused in the act of lifting her coffee cup. "That's it, Uh-huh? Not even 'yes, dear'?"

He lowered the section of paper he was reading. "That's 'uh-huh' as in you shouldn't be standing at the window watching strangers hang around the streets. Which you would know if you ever looked at anything besides the funnies."

"I read the movie section," she mumbled.

"Listen to this: The body of a boy, aged sixteen or seventeen, was discovered near the corner of 32nd Street and Bonner Boulevard this morning by a policeman patrolling the area. Officer Clarence Amalfi found the boy face up on the sidewalk, fully-clothed. No evidence of foul play was observable. The body carried no identification." He paused and looked over at her. "That's barely a block away from

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# ANTS

*In the end the little things always catch up with you.*

by Chet Williamson

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN BREAKEY

Ben Piersall first saw them at the bottom of the drive, where the asphalt had been torn away by the combination of the harsh winter and the big tires of the oil delivery truck. They had a substantial hill in progress, six inches across at the center and an inch high.

Ants. Ants he didn't need. The goddamned moles were bad enough. His lawn already had more soft spots than a week-old melon. So he drew back his foot and kicked, making the dirt fly up in a waist-high arc.

That got them. They poured from the hole like a thick black thread, run-



ning in panic at the cataclysm that had ripped off the top of their city. Ben chuckled and began to stomp. In a minute the tiny scurrying motions had ended, though a few survivors still ran for cover and a multitude of wounded writhed in the furrows made by Ben's Vibram soles.

He turned and walked smiling toward the house, the mail tucked under his arm. That was fun—but not as much fun as when he was a kid and had dripped candle wax on the ants one at a time. In a few seconds you could peel the dried wax off the sidewalk and put a petrified ant in your pocket. Ben used to take a bunch to school, where they made unheralded appearances in the urinal, Mrs. Donovan's pencil cup, and Sheila Brown's milk.

But time had passed, he'd grown up, gotten married, gotten divorced, gotten tired. Small pleasures were all he could afford now. Alimony and child support allowed little else. A case of beer a week, an occasional movie, a very occasional roll with Mindy, the waitress at the Anchor, and whatever else he could find to amuse himself ... like stomping ants. At least he'd been able to keep the house.

Inside, he opened a Bud and flopped on the sofa with a copy of Ms. Harriet's two-year subscription was still going strong. He frowned at the article titles and picked up *Sports Illustrated* instead.

He had barely opened the magazine when his nose started to itch. He looked down its broad length and noticed a small black dot at the point where his vision crossed. Thinking it might be a misplaced period on the page, he wiggled both his eyes and the magazine, but, instead of disappearing, the dot took a few tentative steps upward on the oily film that coated Ben's proboscis.

"An ant!" he yelled, and smashed himself lustily on the nose. When he examined what stuck to his fingers, he found that it was indeed an ant, or rather crushed bits of ant head, ant thorax, and ant legs. "Ee-yuch," he said, and snapped the debris away.

Halfway through his article on football draft choices his head started to itch, right at the thin patch he called his crown and Harriet had called his bald spot. Whatever the appellation, it itched like a bitch, so he scratched madly and came away with something beneath his nail that was too dark to be dandruff. Too dark and too wiggly.

"Another one? Jesus H!" and he

crushed the interloper, flinging its corpse to join its friend in the thick and tangled jungle of ten year old shag carpet. "Where the hell did he come from?" mused Ben, looking about for an answer. When he glanced at the left foot he'd so dapperly propped on the coffee table, he found it. His boot was swarming with little black bodies that were quickly disappearing between pant cuff and sock.

"Gaaah!" he shouted as the hairlike legs pattered over the skin of his calf. "Heeheyahah!" He sat up faster than when the detective Harriet had hired surprised him at the Sunrise Motel, and started to smack his legs

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*Little black bodies were quickly disappearing between his pant cuff and sock. "Gaah!" he shouted as hairlike legs pattered over his skin.*

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together vigorously.

When the tickling had diminished, he examined the source of the problem, unlacing the boot and turning it over. The thick depressions of the Vibram soles still sheltered dozens of the little hangers-on. Ben, now smacking his thighs, ran outside, where he smashed the boot against the sidewalk, and kept smashing until nothing remained but a nondescript blob of formic acid.

"That'll show ya, little buggers ... wow!" he cried, as a survivor fastened its appendage to Ben's appendage. Ben danced about frantically, his hand thrust between waistband and belly, until he finally snagged the ant and crushed it. Then, leaving his boots outside, he went into the house, where he immediately shed his clothes, threw them in the washing machine, and ran into the bathroom.

In the shower, he made the water as hot as he could stand it, rubbed and scrubbed his skin raw with Harriet's old loofah, and dug his fingers into his scalp until it tingled on the edge of pain. Then he rinsed thoroughly, turned off the faucet, and

stepped into the mat. There, goddammit, that was better. No more ants on him now.

But as he toweled himself dry, he became aware of a slight itching in his hair. He scratched, and a small ant fell out. Then another, and another.

Gasping, he staggered back, his legs bumping against the side of the tub so that he toppled backwards into it, his bare buttocks striking the porcelain with a loud smack. He still had the towel, and now he saw that it was swarming with ants, dozens and dozens of them making an ever changing pattern on the blue cloth. Throwing it from him, he stood up in the tub, naked and trembling. They were entering the bathroom by the hundreds, so thick that they seemed like a living mass of tar rolling toward the edge of the bath.

Ben grabbed the faucet handles and wrenched them on, sending hot water streaming over his body, washing down the drain the few ants that had made it into the tub. Several more dropped over the edge and were swept straight into the plumbing. After that the others stopped, and Ben could read an angry wariness in the multitude of black specks that stood between him and the door.

A minute passed while the water roared down and the room filled with steam. Then a single ant started up the wall, and others followed until a blob of darkness two feet square moved to the ceiling, over and across the room, and stopped directly above the cowering form of Ben Piersall.

Ants lay like a sheet on the floor, clung overhead to the ceiling, flowed in a wave under the crack of the door—hundreds, thousands, *tens* of thousands of ants ...

"Stop!" Ben Piersall cried, his voice lengthened and curved by his terror and the thunder of the shower. "Please stop! I'm sorry! I'll do whatever you want, whatever ..." He collapsed sobbing in the bottom of the tub, each hot droplet of water stinging him like a tiny mandible.

The ants watched, and smiled a collective smile.

Later that afternoon, people at the Acme Market started to wonder about Ben Piersall. They wondered why he looked so pale and nervous, they wondered why he bought six cases of pancake syrup, and they wondered, on such a hot summer day, how Ben Piersall could wear a thick, black, shiny scarf wrapped tightly around his neck and still be shivering. ■

# THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK

*What strange alchemy will filmmaker George Miller work on John Updike's bestselling fantasy novel?*

by James Verniere

Jack Nicholson as the Devil? Sounds like perfect casting, right? "A lot of people think I've been preparing for this role all my life," Nicholson himself acknowledged in a recent interview. Whether or not Nicholson will fit the bill as the Prince of Darkness in George Miller's upcoming film, *The Witches of Eastwick*, really depends on whether you like your Satanic Majesty subtle or reeking of sulfur. A lot also depends on what sort of alchemy Australian filmmaker George Miller, director of *Mad Max* and *Road Warrior*, works on John Updike's controversial best-selling novel in the upcoming twenty-five million

dollar Warner film adaptation scheduled for release next month.

*The Witches of Eastwick*, which was first published in 1984 and was on *The New York Times* best-seller list for three months, provoked quite a clamor from book reviewers who loved its depiction of sex, drugs, and sorcery in contemporary New England, and from real-life witches like Salem's Laurie Cabot, who found the novel scandalous. Set in a mythical Rhode Island town called Eastwick, the novel—in which L.L. Bean seems to mingle freely with the *Malleus Malleficarum*—focuses on three modern-day witches, whose

"cone of power" is interrupted by the arrival of a Mephistophelean stranger from New York City suggestively named Darryl Van Horne. The novel charts the diabolically comical and sexy effect Van Horne has on the lives and the activities of the witches, and it combines the titillating aspects of infidelity, group sex, small town gossip, and modern sorcery in the urbane style of one of America's most acclaimed writers.

Shooting on the film—which was produced by Neil Canton (*Back to the Future*, *Buckaroo Banzai*) and Peter Guber and Jon Peters (*Flashdance*, *An American Werewolf in London*)—





**CINEMATIC SORCERY:** Movie magic transformed the sleepy village of Cohasset, Mass. into John Updike's mythical Rhode Island town. Will Updike's story undergo equally drastic changes? At left, Jack Nicholson as the devilish Darryl (or Daryl) Van Horne, with Michele Pfeiffer, Susan Sarandon and Cher (left to right) as the three witches who fall under his spell.

began last summer in Massachusetts. Although the filmmakers were not made welcome in Rhode Island (where authorities would not allow them to shoot inside a local church). George Miller and his crew—with the help of the Massachusetts Film Commission—were warmly welcome in Cohasset, a town of 7,700 which boasts the historic First Parish meeting house, built in 1746, which serves as a Unitarian/Universalist church in the film.

The day I visited the "closed" set, for instance, Jack Nicholson was seen waving to the crowd and signing autographs. His co-star Cher,

however, was at home nursing a case of "double whiplash" in the aftermath of a rear-ender, and Susan Sarandon and Michelle Pfeiffer, who play the other eponymous witches, were reportedly secluded in their trailers.

The transformation of Cohasset from real-life place to Hollywood film set was so subtle that it was often difficult to determine what was real and what was fictive. The offices of The Eastwick Word and the Eastwick Market were clearly artificial. But were the "Cards and Shards" or the "Kit and Kaboodle" real local shops or the creative work of production designer Polly Platt?

Work progressed uneventfully. Cops and production assistants herded the public out of the way. The camera crew laid dolly tracks in the center Cohasset's main drag (which was littered with trash and dead leaves for the occasion). And although a film set is a tedious place, it assumed a mythic significance in the eyes of the local population, many of whom who were waiting to catch a glimpse of "Jack." Finally, as if by collective conjuring, Nicholson emerged again from his trailer, dressed in a filthy pink bathrobe (stained with cherry juice for the shooting) just as the crowd reached

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EQUAL TIME FOR WITCHES:  
Laurie Cabot (right) with her  
daughter, Jody.

# THE WITCH of SALEM

## An Interview With Laurie Cabot

by James Verniere

**L**aurie Cabot, proclaimed the "Official Witch of Salem" by Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, will probably curse me for saying this, but when I hear the word "witch," the first image the pops into my (admittedly brainwashed) head is still Margaret Hamilton's hook-nosed Wicked Witch of the West, rubbing her taloned claws together and crackling with demented glee. Or some other equally slanted and unflattering portrait of witches perpetuated by mass media, especially television: The purring feline Kim Novak casting a magic spell over another woman's fiancé in *Bell, Book, and Candle*. Or Janet Blair as a professor's sorcerous wife in *Burn, Witch, Burn!* Or Agnes Moorhead as the imperious Endora on TV's *Bewitched*; all examples of how popular culture skews our impressions of witches.

Yet despite the distortions, witches remain among most fascinating figures in the literature and art of our culture. There is the "witch of Endor" in the Old Testament; the three "weird sisters" of *Macbeth*; Arthur's witchy half-sister, Morgan LeFay; and the "sky-clad" hags who rub themselves with "flying ointment" and sail over New England rooftops in any number of folk tales.

And the list goes on. Drug-dealing

Circe, one of western literature's first witches, turned men into swine in Homer's *Odyssey*. Medea, the witch immortalized by Euripedes, murdered her children before escaping in a serpent-drawn chariot. Not to mention manifestations of witchcraft in contemporary fiction like Ira Levin's best-seller, *Rosemary's Baby* or John Updike's *The Witches of Eastwick*.

To Laurie Cabot, all of the above is part and parcel of a conspiracy as old as the pyramids, a conspiracy designed to suppress the religion of her ancestors and to persecute those foolish or brave enough to practice it openly today.

But Cabot is more than an eccentric crusader. She is also a pillar of her community. Co-chair of the Witches' League for Public Awareness (P.O. Box 8736, Salem, MA 01971), elder in the community of Salem witches, teacher, lecturer, Tarot reader, psychic, divorcee and mother, Laurie Cabot was born in Oklahoma ("by a fluke") and grew up in California. Although she has known that she was a witch since she was sixteen, she did not "come out" publicly until after moving with her family—including her two daughters, Penny and Jody, who are also witches ("of their own free will")—to Salem in 1969.

Her house, which is situated on a

dead-end street beside the water, is two hundred years old. But aside from its historical value, it looks very much like anybody's home, except perhaps for the art which adorns the walls of her kitchen, almost all of which depicts cats. There are black cats, striped cats, tricolor cats, ceramic cats, and stuffed cats. There is even a winged cat. Laurie Cabot, who wears a pentacle around her neck and rings on every finger, appears decidedly catlike herself as she glides about the room in her black robes.

She seems to realize instinctively that I need to be put at ease, and she does so effortlessly. Despite her unorthodox appearance, she has what might be described as a friendly aura, and as she brews me a cup of tea (Lipton's), she dispels my preconceptions about witches with a manner one might call "charming"—literally as well as figuratively.

**VERNIERE:** How do you describe yourself?

**CABOT:** I'm a witch. The word is related to magus, which means "wise person." That's what witchcraft is. It's the craft of the wise, and witches are the "wise people." We're pre-Christian, and I'm just one in a long line of witch-

es. The Cabots come from the Isle of Jersey off the coast of England, and up to recent times—say within the last eighty or ninety years—the only religion on that island was witchcraft. Witchcraft is a science, an art and a religion, all three. And it can be practiced as one or all three.

VERNIERE: When did you discover that you were a witch?

CABOT: I was an only child, and I figured it out by the time I was about sixteen. I had several psychic experiences that could not be explained. But my parents were very intelligent people, and although they didn't necessarily understand what I was, they didn't discourage me from pursuing my interests.

VERNIERE: Given the history of persecution in this country, why do you live in Salem, Massachusetts, of all places?

CABOT: [Laughing] I didn't come here to do this, believe me. I was divorced and living in Boston's North End with my two children, and I had a friend, who was also divorced with two children, and she said, "You belong in Salem." But I said, "Not me. I'm not going there." In those days, in the late '60s, Salem was a run-down little town, nothing like what it is now. She suggested that we move to the suburbs, rent a house and pool our money. So we made a magic circle—to help us find a house—and a week later she had found a wonderful place, which, of course, turned out to be in Salem. It had eighteen rooms on a nice street, and Hawthorne had lived in it. It was beautiful and affordable, and my friend assured me that people would not know I was a witch. "So you wear black, so what? They'll think you're in mourning," she said.

VERNIERE: Excuse me, but why do you wear black?

CABOT: Because it absorbs light and energy. Unlike Christians, we wear white only at funerals to trap and reflect the light and the energy of the one who's died.

VERNIERE: Then you believe in an afterlife?

CABOT: No, I do believe in ghosts, but they're just leftover energy forms, like natural holograms.

VERNIERE: Today, Salem has a thriving tourist industry, which celebrates its witch history. I've also noticed lots of signs advertising Tarot readers and shops, like yours, selling witch-related paraphernalia. How did this revival of pride in witchcraft occur?

CABOT: [Proudly] I did it. When I moved here people didn't even know

what a witch was, and they were ashamed of what had happened here. So one day, I thought, Wait a minute, I'm living in "Witch City," and half the people won't say the word, and the other half don't even think witches exist? So I put on my robes and said, "I'm a witch." It was quite a step then. Now, of course, people have some education. They understand what a witch is. The town has been revived. And I, a witch, am a member of the Board of Directors of the Salem Chamber of Commerce.

VERNIERE: Salem is also the setting of Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," a story in which he names women who were really put to death during the witch

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*"A witch's powers are natural in origin. There is no such thing as the supernatural. There are only natural phenomena that ordinary science cannot explain."*

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trials, at which his own grandfather presided. Do you remember the story?

CABOT: Not really. I read it a long time ago.

VERNIERE: It gives a recipe for "flying ointment," which includes "the fat of a newborn babe."

CABOT: [Grinacing] How gross! We have our own babies! That's just more propaganda. What a way to demean a group of people. We have been the dumping ground for all the ills of the earth, and this is why I dedicated my life to being a witch. I said, "I will never, ever again, deny that I am a witch. I became public because I felt it was necessary, mainly because, since the "Burning Times"—around the Reformation—witchcraft has become coupled with Satanism. I want to correct that because nine million people—most of them women—were killed as a result of the persecution of witchcraft.

VERNIERE: Where does that figure come from?

CABOT: It's a matter of history.

VERNIERE: Because the persecution of witches was also a kind of sexism?

CABOT: It certainly was.

VERNIERE: How long have you been

able to make a living as a public and professional witch?

CABOT: It took a while. First of all, when I started to work as a psychic, people were still afraid to come to a witch. I started doing psychic consultations around 1970. I also taught for free and did readings for free. But that was wrong. My time is valuable like any other professional's, so now I charge for my services and my lectures. I also work as a counselor on Wall Street.

VERNIERE: Do you know Ivan Boesky?

CABOT: [Grinning conspiratorially] Ah-hah! But the Wall Street firm I work for doesn't want me to mention its name. I can say that I work with bond traders though.

VERNIERE: Is that common?

CABOT: I'm fifty-four years old and I've been doing it for thirty years and I've always heard about it. Even in the '20s, there were some people who got out of the "Crash" safely because they were using psychics. There are several psychics working right now for major companies. For example, I work for a chemical diagnosis company. I also work with the police, but I hate doing that. I've had sheriffs from Wyoming and Colorado come and ask me to do psychological profiles on criminals.

VERNIERE: Serial killers in particular?

CABOT: That and ritualistic type crimes or crimes that look ritualistic. Usually, they're contrived garbage: some maniac's idea of a ritual that he got cut of some horrible book somewhere, some Satanic literature. People think that witches are Satanists, so everytime there's something that suggests Satanism, it's attributed to witchcraft. There are six million witches in America, and I don't know one who isn't a normal, everyday person. In fact, you can't tell one from the other. I'm the only "obvious" witch I know [she indicates her outfit and make-up with an ironic laugh]. You can find me anywhere.

VERNIERE: Can you describe a typical session?

CABOT: People don't ask me questions. I don't allow that. I use Tarot cards, and I tell them everything I see, and nine out of ten times I figure out what their problems are and how and if they can be resolved. Usually, they need a marriage counselor or a psychologist or a medical doctor. But they need to hear that. I don't, by the way, do medical diagnoses unless the person is already under a doctor's care. I think it's wrong. It's like psychics who run around chasing the police. They wait until somebody loses a child and then they call the family. That's an irresponsible

and cruel thing to do. I only work with the police if they come to me.

**VERNIERE:** Quite a few of my friends have given up their therapists for psychics. Why do you think there's been such a revival of interest in the occult lately?

**CABOT:** It's the result of information. The information concerning the science, the art and the religion of witchcraft was once hidden—occult. Now, it's out there. It's available and it's a practical way of life. It helps people to control themselves and their environment. Most of the other religions preach that things are out of our hands. It's always God or the Devil doing things to us.

**VERNIERE:** Is it true that witches worship a goddess?

**CABOT:** In the beginning witches naturally formed into matriarchal groups. We do have a consort figure, who is male. We consider male and female witches as equal. But the primary deity in our religion is a female.

**VERNIERE:** An earth goddess or a moon goddess?

**CABOT:** She's all of those. She's the creatrix. In Egyptian mythology, she appears as Nuit, who is the sky. But she appears in various forms in all religions. Early Greek and Roman religion was a form of witchcraft, and it was matriarchal. The three goddesses Robert Graves describes in *The White Goddess* are just the three different aspects of the female deity.

**VERNIERE:** Do a witch's powers come from the supernatural?

**CABOT:** No, they're all natural in origin. There is no such thing as the supernatural. There are only natural phenomena that ordinary science cannot explain. We believe that all of a witch's powers come from the pineal gland, and they are connected to the intake of light and energy. Everybody has some power, but we develop the gland as part of our scientific studies. In my case, I have psychic power and healing power (which I only use in conjunction with a doctor's care). For instance, I broke my arm a few weeks ago [she shows me her arm, which looks fine], and although I went to see a doctor, I also healed it myself. The doctor was amazed at how quickly it knit.

**VERNIERE:** When you talk about witches as "we," are you referring to specific branch or sect? Or do all witches believe the same things?

**CABOT:** There are certainly different groups. I belong to the Witches of Salem. Because we were underground for so long, it was natural for different schools to develop. Witchcraft is a regional phenomenon. There are witch-

es that like to dance nude in the moonlight, though to me that's kind of silly. You don't have to be nude to be psychic. I can sit here and go through walls with my mind. Why do I have to dance nude in the moonlight? As for other sects, there is Alexandrian Witchcraft, Gardnerian Witchcraft. And there are those who practice witchcraft as a pure science.

**VERNIERE:** What about Satanism? Is it the same thing as witchcraft?

**CABOT:** [Adamantly] Oh, no. No! Satanists are just people who take what Christians do, and do it backwards! There were people who were so repelled by the Church that they said, well, if the Church worships



God, then we'll worship the Devil. Then they took the symbols of the church, like the cross and the pentacle, and turned them upside-down to make so-called Satanic symbols. Christianity, not witchcraft, produced Satanism. With all their knowledge, witches would not have used the Christian Devil to create a religion. That just doesn't make any sense. Witches stayed true to their own religion and remained underground. But this, of course, led to more anti-witch propaganda because there were actual groups manipulating and coopting our symbols, calling themselves Satan-worshippers.

**VERNIERE:** What are the major ceremonies of witchcraft?

**CABOT:** There are eight. I don't want to describe them all. But Halloween is our New Year. Winter Solstice, the twenty-first of December, is the time when the arch-Druids, the witches, take crystals and plants that draw light and put them into caves. They burn frankincense and myrrh, and they leave those things there until the 25th of December, when the light—the sun—is re-born. Sound familiar?

**VERNIERE:** Are there any sacred books, like the Bible or the Koran?

**CABOT:** There are a number of informative, modern books. One is called *The Spiral Dance* by Star Hawk, a witch from San Francisco. Another is *Positive Magic* by Marion Weinstein, a New York witch. But there are no ancient books because our knowledge is bardic, it's an oral tradition. The grimoires that the Church used as evidence of our wrongdoing were forgeries. That's where you'll find your baby fat recipes. Most of our ancient books were burned with the library at Alexandria. The Vatican also has a few, including the excluded volumes of the Bible, which deal with the occult, locked up in its basement. But they're not about to release them.

**VERNIERE:** What about a book like Cavendish's *The Black Arts*?

**CABOT:** Oh, yeah. I have it inside. He's a creep. There are some good things in his book, but most of it is garbage. And that's why the Witches League is dedicated to giving people information. You know, if the fundamentalists would just follow their own rules, like "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor," they'd leave us alone.

**VERNIERE:** Is there a similar moral code in your religion?

**CABOT:** We have one rule: "Do what ye will and harm none." We're not allowed to harm any living being. We can do anything we want to get our energy out there, create all we want, but we can do no harm. It's against the edicts of the craft. You'll never see a witch war.

**VERNIERE:** Didn't Aleister Crowley war with his competitors?

**CABOT:** He competed with them, sure. There's in-fighting now among the different witch groups. But that's not a war. It's an argument. Crowley was like a child with the Cavendish book, only he carried it to extremes. If you can make heads or tails out of his books, then you tell me.

**VERNIERE:** Why are witches automatically thought of as evil?

**CABOT:** It's more propaganda. Real witches do not commit evil because it is part of our belief that anything you do comes back on you three times. We would never use our power to destroy. If we came up against someone who is trying to do us harm, our natural reaction is to neutralize that person's ability to do evil. I remember for instance a friend whose lover had left his wife. The wife was so violent and destructive that they came and asked me to do something to stop her. So what I did

was to neutralize her anger, not to direct it against her. You know, an enchantment, a spell, is just a prayer, an attempt to make things better. Well, in a few weeks, this woman had a new lover and had forgotten all about her anger and destructiveness she'd felt before.

The best way to deal with enemies is not to do them harm, but to have them found out for what they are. Lyndon LaRouche, for example, started this whole campaign to prove that witches are Satanists. He had his people here in Salem marching with placards, denouncing witches in the most vile terms, saying that we were drug pushers, that I was personally involved with Satanic rock groups, everything. We didn't try to harm him. But as you can see, he's been found out for what he is. He's been neutralized.

VERNIERE: Why is the Christian Church so adamantly against witchcraft?

CABOT: You must understand their motives. In the early times of Christianity, the peasants—the people who lived in the countryside—were so-called pagans. They believed in the old ways.

But in the city, where the cathedrals were built, the Church was in power. So out in the country there were these little matriarchal groups, where the elder, an old woman, was the healer of the tribe. Sure, she probably had scraggly hair and hardly any teeth. At first, the Church just warned against them, saying that their herbal cures were poison and that they were poisoners, which is how the words for poison and witch got mixed up in the Bible. The church didn't want people going to witches for advice and whatever version of the AMA existed didn't want people going to witches for healing. We should have stood up for our rights, but even I don't know if I could be as outspoken as I am now if we were going through another "Burning Time."

VERNIERE: But aren't those witches who are in the business of doing evil?

CABOT: [Impatiently] That's such a Christian question. I can't account for every witch. I suppose there are a few bad witches. But on the whole we are good people, and this image of the evil, the "wicked witch," is a fantasy perpetuated by the propaganda of the media and the Church.

Understand, I have nothing against pure Christianity. Early Christianity was not at odds with witchcraft. In fact, we believe that Jesus was a magus, a witch. He had his twelve apostles, and he made their number thirteen, which is the number needed to form a coven. Early Christians actually joined in with

us. The priest used to do the maypole dance with us and join in with the communities. Of course, they just wanted to lure us into Christianity.

Basically all Christianity is derived from witchcraft. The pentacle, for instance, was worn by early Christians, as well as the cross, and the pentacle was also a witch's symbol. We use a magic circle, and all Orthodox churches, Greek and Roman Catholic, have the sanctity of the altar, which is a circular area. They have an altar, candles, a chalice, incense, vestments of colors like red and green (which are Mars and Venus). The Pope was carrying a staff the other day—a magic wand—which

*"We have been the  
dumping ground  
for all the ills  
of the earth.  
Nine million  
people were  
killed as a  
result of the  
persecution of  
witchcraft."*

has a two-headed dragon on it. It's a witch's wand. The whole pageantry of the orthodox churches is derived from witchcraft. There are crucial differences though. We don't have a devil. And we all participate in our ceremonies. There is no audience.

In fact, Witchcraft has more in common with Buddhism than with Satanism. Buddhism teaches us that we're all connected to a universal force and that we contribute to the harmony of the universe by doing good.

VERNIERE: Do you think the revival of interest in the occult is tied to the fundamentalist movements?

CABOT: No, I think that the Fundamentalists are digging their heels in, is all. We were told about the change-over to the Aquarian Age, weren't we? Weren't we told that the people of the old ways, of the blind beliefs, would dig their heels in out of fear of change? If you look at the craft, you can see we offer facts. We don't have to recruit anyone.

VERNIERE: So you don't make converts?

CABOT: Oh, no, no. But we will give you the facts and let you make

up your own mind. Even my own daughters went to *shul* and Catechism and Protestant churches and classes about Buddhism. They were given a choice and a thorough background in science before they decided on a religion.

VERNIERE: Why do you think that fundamentalists like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell carry on about the occult messages in music and children's toys and movies?

CABOT: Isn't it a shame? It's so silly. If they would only focus on the basis of their religion, which is primarily good and helps people to make themselves whole. It's a beautiful religion. Why the theatrics? Why must they frighten people and demean other groups? What are they going to do when they find out they're not the bad guys? What are they going to do? What are they going to do without their reformed Satanists [Laughter]?

VERNIERE: Do you fear extermination? Another "Burning Time?"

CABOT: Witchcraft will never be extinct, and one of our mottoes is, "Never again the burning." We may be forced underground again, and since no one knows what a witch looks like, it's easy to disappear. You can't find a witch. That's why they picked anybody and everybody during the "Burning Time."

I try to do everything I can to change the people's misconceptions. The reason we've gone after the media, for example, is that they do more damage than Christianity did. Television and movies have more of an impact than Christianity today, and they're still persecuting us because it makes a good movie or a good show. VERNIERE: I know that you've protested the making of *The Witches of Eastwick*, for instance. What do you want the filmmakers to do?

CABOT: Just to add a disclaimer at the beginning of the film. Why not? They did it with *The Godfather* and *The Year of the Dragon*. It would enhance their film. And remember, we didn't try to stop their film. I'm not trying to deprive them of their livelihood. But we are citizens of this country, and we deserve the same rights as other citizens. There are, after all, six million of us, and according to one poll we're the fastest growing religion in America today.

VERNIERE: Can you imagine where witchcraft is headed? Will you ever be totally accepted? Or will you remain shadowy figures?

CABOT: I think we'll be accepted one day. I think it's happening now. In their hearts, everyone's a witch. ■

# EASTWICK

(continued from page 53)

its peak. He acknowledged the hoots of admirers and smiled at the local girls. The atmosphere was friendly, almost festive and Nicholson behaved exactly as one would expect: sitting behind the lines on the set, wearing a pair of dark sunglasses, he looked naughty but relaxed. Australian filmmaker, George Miller, meanwhile, dressed Outback-style in a white cap, khaki shorts and heel-less leather sandals, spent much of the time confering with his cinematographer, Vilmos Zsigmond.

Translating the novel's adult themes to the screen was the job of Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and scenarist Michael Christofer (*The Shadow Box*, *Falling in Love*). At first glance, what strikes one most about Christofer's script is the seemingly arbitrary changes it makes. For example, in Updike's novel, the leader of the witches is Alexandra Spofford, a middle-aged, divorced mother from Colorado who is an amateur sculptor, has a pet black Labrador (familiar?) aptly named Coal, and a couple of teenaged children. Lexa, as she is called by her fellow sorceresses, is in Updike's words, "a large, drifting style of witch," and she is the novel's Earth Goddess, whose primary preoccupations are her phobias about getting cancer and being overweight, her sculptures and the affair she's having with a local married man.

Cher, of course, was cast in the part in the film, and perhaps because of that the character has been modified. Her name has been changed to Alexandra Medford. Instead of being a divorcee—who transforms her ex-husband into "mere dust," which she keeps in a jar as a souvenir—she has become a widow with an eight year-old daughter for the film. She is also no longer having an affair with somebody else's husband. Is this a sign that the Puritans—in the form of Hollywood's conservative marketing strategists—have denatured Updike's intoxicatingly wicked witches' brew?

Similar changes have been made in the portrait of the novel's two other witches: Jane Smart and Sukie Rougemont. Jane Smart, a darkly attractive divorced musician—described by Up-

dike as "hot, short and concentrated"—keeps her dried-up ex-husband, whom she occasionally takes a pinch of to spice up a dish, hanging in the basement with the "herbs and simples." In the film, the statuesque Susan Sarandon (*The Hunger*) plays the part, and in this case the character's name has become, instead of Jane Smart, Jane Spofford.

Updike's Sukie Rougemont, the sexiest of the three weird sisters, is a slender redhead with "an oscillating essence" who "permanizes" her ex-husband "and uses him as a place mat." She is also a gossip columnist for the *Eastwick Word* for which she writes "Eastwick Eyes and Ears." In the film version, the character, who is played by the ineffably gorgeous Michelle Pfeiffer (*Scarface*), is still a newspaper reporter, but has been rechristened Sukie Ridgemont. (In addition, Darryl Van Horne, Updike's modern version of Old Nick has lost an "r." In Christofer's script, he's just plain Daryl.) Other changes have clearly been made to accommodate the inimitable style of Jack Nicholson, including a seduction scene in which Van Horne describes himself offhandedly as a "horny little devil." Can't you just picture those apostrophic eyebrows growing erect for the camera?

Some of these changes are bound to disturb the novel's fans. In the script, for instance, the husbands of the three heroines now appear to have victimized their wives. Cher's witch no longer keeps her used-up ex-husband's dust in a jar. Instead her husband Ozzie has died tragically, leaving her to face the future alone. Sukie's husband Monty is no longer a place mat. He's run off with an *au pair* girl. And while the women in the novel have affairs with local married men—making them objects of fear, gossip, and jealousy in the book—and on one occasion put a killing curse on a female rival, in the film they're courageous loners, and the objects of unsolicited sexual advances. Perhaps in keeping with this, instead of appearing of his own accord, Van Horne is unwittingly summoned, in the film—a la the 1958 film, *Bell, Book and Candle*—to Eastwick by the witches, who are starved for love and affection.

Why the alterations? According to one source, the name changes are an ordinary part of turning a novel into a film because the legal restraints on a novelist are less stringent than those on a filmmaker. Film studio "clearance departments" must research a name

thoroughly, and if a real person exists who may in some way be mistaken for a fictional film character, adjustments are routinely made to avoid legal entanglements.

But in addition to these conventional changes, Michael Christofer has also made more substantial alterations. In its novel form, *The Witches of Eastwick* was an amoral and at times raunchy celebration of the mysteries of sex, marriage and motherhood. In its film incarnation, it appears the emphasis will shift, turning the film into a kind of supernatural feminist fable.



**SPEAK OF THE DEVIL:**  
Nicholson between takes  
on the location in "Eastwick".

Instead of three sexually-active sorceresses, the film's heroines seem to have become occult suffragettes—spellbinding feminists who find themselves unexpectedly at the mercy of the ultimate male chauvinist: the Devil. And Van Horne seems to have become the ultimate prick (phallus?), an incarnation of the male sex drive, whose goal is to turn three liberated ladies into sex objects and domestic slaves.

So much can happen in an editing room that we'll have to wait until the hurlyburly's done to see how the film turns out. (Rumor has it that the film's ending has been re-shot.) Although one is honor-bound to give a director as original as George Miller the benefit of the doubt (look, for instance what he did with the "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet" episode of the *Twilight Zone* movie), it sounds like *The Witches of Eastwick* might be in danger of becoming *The Witches of Stepford*. Which "Witches" will it be? ■

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# JESUS ON HONSHU

*What a man does when young becomes  
a legend to himself when he is old.*

by John Updike

ILLUSTRATION BY ROGER DE MUTH

JAPANESE LEGEND SAYS  
JESUS ESCAPED TO ORIENT

—Headline, and passages  
in italics below, from the  
Times

**T**OKYO—A Japanese legend has excited some curiosity here, that Jesus did not die on the cross outside Jerusalem, but lived in a remote village on the northern part of the Japanese island of Honshu until his death at 106 years of age.

The distances within His blue eyes used to frighten the children. Though toward the end, when His age had passed eighty, His stoop and brittle movements within the kimono approximated the manner of an elderly Japanese. His face, up close, never conformed—the olive skin, the tilted nostrils sprouting hair, the lips excessive in flesh and snarling humor, the eyelids very strange, purplish and wrinkled like the armpits of a salamander. There was never much doubt in the village that He was some sort of god. Even had His eyes given on less immensity, had their blue been flayed by one fleck of amber or one weak ray of pearl, He would have been revered and abhorred by the

children.\* His skin was abnormally porous, His voice came from too deep in His body.

*Jesus, so the legend runs, first arrived in Japan at the age of 21 during the reign of the emperor Suinin in what would have been the year 27 B.C. He remained for 11 years under the tutelage of a sage of Etchu Province, the modern Toyama prefecture, from whom he learned much about the country and its customs.*

Strangely the distances had melted within Him, leaving little more trace than ice cakes along the shore leave in spring. What a man does when young becomes a legend to himself when he is old. The straight roads through orange deserts, the goat paths winding through mauve mountains, the silver rivers whose surfaces He discovered He could walk, the distant herds like wandering lakes, the clouds of birds darkening the sun, the delegations of brown people, of yellow people, the green forests where sunlight fell in tiger stripes, the brown forests (tree trunks shaggy as bears, star-blue but

(continued on page 67)

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# GRASS SHARK

*It was a nice, quiet, peaceful sort of day. Except for the sharks.*

by Paul Walton

ILLUSTRATION BY BART GOLDMAN

**T**he other day I was talking to a fellow named Arnie who had built a dinosaur. Beast was out in the back yard eating on the trees, me and Arnie out front working on his car.

Nice car it was, too. Didn't run. Looked to me like it was made that way. Arnie slid out from under, sat up to put a wrench on the running board. Grease all over the side of the car where he'd been hanging on trying to bust loose some nut or other. He spit out some rust flakes, looked over at me and smiled.

I said, "Arnie, seems like a fella could built a dinosaur ought to be able to make some old car run."

He didn't speak for a while as he was busy trying to pluck a rust flake from the vicinity of his left eye without getting grease all over his face. He was unsuccessful. I picked up a screwdriver and cleaned my fingernails. Eventually Arnie crawled back under the car to say something which I could not understand due to distance and obstacles.

"What?" I asked.

His face appeared in the wheel well. "I said," he said, "I didn't build it. I rented it." The face vanished into the shadows.

"Same difference," I said. "You better un-rent it or you're not gonna have any trees left back there at all."

It was quiet for a while so I listened to the motor sounds of the beast digging up the back yard. Arnie was still working on the same stub-

born nut. His hand came out from under the car, fumbled around the running board making new grease marks on the door.

"Arnie?" I asked.

"What?"

"You're getting grease all over the door, here."

"Thanks. Why don't you hand me that wrench?"

"This one here?" I asked, "Up on the running board?"

"That's the one."

"Okay," I handed him the wrench. "How long do you think it'll take them."

"Take who?"

"The dinosaur guys."

"Couple weeks, they say," he said.

"What are you gonna do about sharks?"

"Sharks?"

"Yeah," I said, "How're you gonna keep them out of the pool?"

"I don't know. Fence, I guess."

I thought about that one for a minute. "You mean swords and stuff?"

"Naw. Not practical. I mean, who's gonna stay out there all night watching for them?"

"That's just what I was thinking," I said.

"Naw. I was thinking maybe chain-link, or something."

"Ummm," I said. "What? Six, eight feet?"

"Yeah, something like that."

"You think that'll be enough?" I asked.

# SHARK

Arnie's face reappeared at the wheel well. "D'you ever see a shark more than about four feet off the ground?"

"I guess you're right," I said.

"Hand me that big hammer there, would you?"

"Sure, Arnie."

Later that same day, sitting on the porch, me and Arnie and my old dog Stretch. Sipping iced tea. Sun was down low, the light and the air gone soft. It was fine sitting there like that. The dinosaur boys had packed up their beast and gone home. Big hole in the back yard, smell of fresh dirt. I'd had to pull old Stretch out of it three times already.

"You know," I said to Stretch, who was asleep, "You're awfully stupid even for a dog."

"Yep," said Arnie, "You'd figure even a dog'd have more sense than to fall in the same hole three times."

"You'd think," I said.

"But not old Stretch," continued Arnie.

"Nope," I said, "There's few dogs can hold a candle to old Stretch."

"That's a fact," said Arnie.

Stretch slept on, unconcerned.

"That's the word for him," I said.

"What is?"

"Unconcerned."

"What? Stretch?"

"Yeah," I said, "He may be stupid, and he may not, but he is clearly unconcerned."

"You may have something there."

"I wonder," I said, "if he's really stupid, or just unconcerned to the point where it don't make any difference."

"I don't know," said Arnie, "I think maybe he's just stupid."

"Well, you may be right."

The afternoon faded.

"Look over there," said Arnie.

"Over where?"

"Over by that tree."

I looked. There was a small ring of tall grass around the base of the tree where the mower wouldn't reach without disrupting Arnie's geometric cutting pattern. Floating silently just above the grassblades was a small green shark no more than two feet long. The faint evening breeze drifted

it a few feet from the tree. Two short sweeps of its tail brought it back into the lee of the grass.

"Mmmm," I said, "Grass shark."

"Big one," said Arnie.

"I believe he's after that squirrel," I said.

"Look out squirrel."

"Yeah."

The squirrel sat on a stump over by the edge of a thicket of trees chewing on a nut or something. It moved in little jerks, glanced around the way squirrels will. It seemed unaware of the grass shark hovering malevolently thirty feet away.

With the smooth skill of a prac-

*Floating silently just above the grassblades was a small green shark no more than two feet long. The faint evening breeze drifted it a few feet from the tree.*

ticed predator the small shark left the shelter of the tall grass to glide across the lawn toward the squirrel. When it was about ten feet away the squirrel spotted it and froze. The shark stopped too, drifted a little in the breeze. For a long few moments the two creatures considered each other. Then, in a lightning movement the squirrel exploded toward a tree and safety. He wasn't quite fast enough. The shark intercepted him in mid-leap at the base of the tree. There was a scuffle, old leaves and twigs and dust in the air. Woke old Stretch.

The scuffle ended with the shark floating by the tree holding a very dead squirrel in its jaws. With a happy bark old Stretch jumped off the porch and went in pursuit. The shark saw Stretch coming, blasted off at low altitude across the lawn. Stretch was moving too fast to make the necessary change of direction, lost a few seconds scrabbling in the dead leaves and whatnot before he could get under way again. Meanwhile the shark had dropped the squirrel in the yard and paused to retrieve it. The continuous barking and the look of simple violence

on the dog's face seemed to affect the shark's concentration. It nosed the carcass indecisively for a moment, picked it up, dropped it again, gave up and ran, stopped again to look at the squirrel and then at Stretch closing like Death himself. It was too much. The shark turned and slid off across the lawn again, about a foot in the air, swimming hard and Stretch not far behind.

By now Arnie and myself were up out of our chairs and into the yard for a better look. In the excitement I managed to spill my iced tea all over myself but the sudden chill just added to the effect, I guess.

The shark banked hard around the big bush by the driveway, dove into the ditch and disappeared into the drainage tile underneath. Stretch got it stopped in time to avoid cracking his head on the tile, which was too bad as it might have done him some good. Still barking like a mad dog he turned to look at me as if to say, "Now what?" Meanwhile the shark had exited the drain from the other side of the driveway and was making time down the ditch.

"There he is!" I yelled, pointing at the shark. "Go get him, boy!"

Stretch looked at me and I could see in his eyes it was pointless. I looked down the road in time to see the shark pop up out of the ditch and vanish in the trees. I sat down, poured myself another glass of tea. Arnie sat down with a sigh. We watched old Stretch worrying the carcass of the squirrel. Finally he picked it up, carried it over to us and dropped it at my feet.

"That sure is a stupid dog," said Arnie.

Stretch beamed up at me with that bright friendly vacant look, wagged his tail, and I had to agree.

Two days later I called Arnie up on the phone. Said, "I've got some bad news, boy, and I need some help."

"What's up, Ace?" he asked.

"Well," I said, "You know my old dog Stretch?"

"Sure," he said, "Big animal, blank expression, I've seen him around."

"Yeah, well, you won't see him much more."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean he's got himself killed."

"Man. That's too bad. Stretch was a good old dog. What happened? Car get him?"

"Naw," I said, "Shark ate him."

"Come on, now."

"I mean it Arnie, saw it happen with my own eyes."

"Aw, come on Ace, you can't tell me a little old grass shark could eat that big

old dog."

"That's just it Arnie. It wasn't any grass shark. At least not a little one. I mean that thing came up the driveway and swallowed that dog whole. I mean tail and all, one gulp."

"Dang. Where is it now?"

"I don't know."

"What do you mean you don't know?"

"I mean when I saw that thing eat old Stretch I didn't hang around to see what he'd do next."

"See what you mean."

"Yeah."

"Well, where are you now?" he asked.

"I'm in the basement. Listen, that's what I need your help with. Why don't you grab your rifle and come over here, help me kill this shark?"

"I'd like to Ace, I really would, but my car's broke down."

"Should have known."

"Yeah. You think you could get over here without being eaten?"

"Maybe."

"Tell you what. You come over here and get me, and we'll get some gear together and go on a little shark hunt."

"All right," I said, "I'm on my way. There's just one thing."

"Hmmm?"

"If I get it I want you to promise me you'll get that shark."

"Count on it, Ace."

"So you didn't see any sign of him on the way over?"

"No. I bet he's around there somewhere, though."

"Yeah."

We were in Arnie's garage rummaging around for shark-hunting stuff.

"Just how big was this shark?" asked Arnie for the third time.

"I don't know. Fifteen, twenty feet."

"Dang," he said, also for the third time. "You really think it was that big?"

"Christ Arnie. I saw the sucker eat my dog!"

"Yeah, yeah, okay." He picked up an old baseball bat, waved it at me.

"Think this'll help?"

"Might help, but personally I wouldn't want to get in that close."

"Big shark, huh?"

"Big shark."

"I don't know, Ace," he said, "I haven't got much'do any good with a shark except the rifle."

"Yeah. Shoot, let me have that

bat. Maybe I can stun him good enough for you to put some holes in him." Just then I happened to look out the garage door. Grabbed Arnie by the arm, pointed with the bat.

"There he is, Arnie!"

The twenty-foot grass shark coasted up the road, turned up the driveway and began to nose around my vehicle.

"Big sucker, ain't he?" said Arnie, and he smiled.

"Hummmph," I said, "Must have followed me over. Say, where'd you leave that rifle?"

"It's in the kitchen."

"Well you best go get it. I'll keep



an eye on the beast."

Arnie went into the house and I eased myself out of the garage for a closer look, crouched behind Arnie's car. The shark had left my vehicle and was nosing around the bushes in the front yard. The wind picked up a bit; the shark swung around, kept his position with small movements of his tail. I felt that he had become aware of me so I choked up on the bat and eased down so my eyes were level with the hood of the car. Old shark eyed me for a minute and I stared right back at him. After what seemed a long time he banked over with the wind and coasted slowly away from me toward the side of the house. As I rose to follow something grabbed me by the shoulder. I died of fright. Nearly brained Arnie with the bat.

"Dang!" I said.

"Dang," Arnie replied.

"Quick!" I said, "He's going around the house."

I pointed, shik-chik said the old Winchester and Arnie was just drawing a bead when the shark flicked his tail and disappeared around the corner of the house.

"Dang one more time," said Arnie.

"C'mon," I said, and we crept through the shrubbery up the front of the house. Got to the corner and pursuit ground to a halt.

"I bet that sucker's waiting just around the corner," I said.

Arnie nodded.

"Tell you what," I said, "I'll jump out there and flush him and you pump him full of lead."

"All right."

I eased up against the house just short of the corner, bat at the ready. Arnie crouched behind a bush.

"Anytime you're ready," he whispered.

I nodded. With a heroic shout I lept out into the yard, weapon raised, "Come and get me you dog-eatin' sonofafish!"

No shark. Felt kind of silly standing there like that.

"Dang yet again," said Arnie.

"Must be around back," I said.

A similar maneuver brought us around into the empty back yard. You could see where the dinosaur boys had been working on the pool. Uprooted trees, big pile of dirt next to the hole. No shark. I could see old Stretch's paw prints in the dirt there. Made me sad. I turned back to look at Arnie standing over by the house, shook my head.

"Old Stretch was a good old dog,"

I said.

"I know it," said Arnie.

"T ain't right, him being struck down in the prime of his life like that by some worthless old shark."

"It ain't right."

"We've got to get that sucker, Arnie—for Stretch."

"Dang straight." Arnie struck a match, rifle cradled under his arm, lighting up a smoke.

"Where do you suppose..." I started to say when I noticed Arnie's eyes getting big. He dropped the match, spit out the cigarette and went for his gun. I turned around in time to see this big old shark about three feet away rising real slow up out of the hole where the pool would be. I fell over backward, tripped over the baseball bat.

BAMMMMMMMMMMMM! Shik-chik...  
BAMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM! Shik-chik...

I could see the white marks on the shark's hide where the bullets were bouncing off.

BAMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!

Another white mark. The shark coasted right over top of me so close I

# SHARK

could smell him.

Shik-chik ...

"Run, Ace. I can't stop him!"

BAMMMMMMMMMMMMM!

Cool as a cucumber, old Arnie, I'll say that for him. That big old monster grass shark not ten feet from him, coasting right at him nice and slow and Arnie stepping back for another shot.

Shik-chik. BAMMMMMMMMMMM!

The shark kept coming. Finally Arnie gave it up and slipped around the corner.

"Head for the garage, Ace!" he yelled.

I wasn't wasting much time. Cleared the pool with one step, lit the afterburners around the other end of the house and skidded into the garage just ahead of Arnie and the shark.

"Get the door!" I screamed. Arnie caught the handle on the run, his feet went out from under him and he crashed to the floor bringing the door with him.

"Dang," he said.

"You bet," I said. I could see the shark peering in the window. "On the fence," I continued, "I believe I'd go twelve feet."

"Fifteen, minimum," he said. "Electrified."

"We're going to need some help," I said.

"Yep."

"I better call somebody." Walked over to the kitchen door. It was locked. "Hey, what did you lock this for?"

"I didn't."

"Well somebody did."

Arnie came over and tried it. "Dang. Must have done it accidentally when I went to get the gun."

"Great," I said. He shrugged. Shark was still hovering over by the window in the garage door. "You got a key?"

"Sure, but ..."

"The keys are in the car," I finished for him.

"Yeah."

I walked over to the window, looked at the car sitting out there with shark shadow all over it. "That sucker's probably a little perturbed, too."

"Probably."

"Looks like we're stuck," I said.

"Don't sweat it, Ace," said Arnie.

Shik-chik ... BAMMMMMMM-

AAAAAMMMMMMAAAAAAMMMMM-

AAAAAMMMMMMAAAAAAMMMMM-

AAAAAMMMMMMMMMMM!!!

The windows shook. My ears rattled. The door swung open.

"Good thinking, Arnie," I said.

"What?"

"Yeah. I got on the phone and called the Police."

"Click ... County Police, Sergeant Beech speaking."

"Hey Sandy, this is Ace."

"Hey Ace! What's up?"

"Listen Sandy, I'm over at Arnie's

*I eased up  
against the house,  
bat at the ready.  
With a heroic  
shout I lept out  
into the yard,  
weapon raised  
"Come and get me  
you dog-eatin'  
sonofafish!"*

place and we got us a little problem here. Well, not so little. There's this grass shark got us trapped in the house."

"Say what?"

"I said there's a grass shark got us trapped in the house. Ate my dog."

"Grass shark?"

"Yeah. Big sucker."

"You say he ate your dog?"

"That's right."

"Not old Stretch?"

"None other. Listen Sandy, we need some help. Arnie's been whaling away at him with the old Winchester and the bullets just keep bouncing off."

"Just how big is this grass shark, Ace?"

"Big, man. I mean big. Swallowed old Stretch whole."

"You been drinking, Ace?"

"Heck no, Sandy."

Arnie said, "What did he say?"

"Asked me have I been drinking,"

I said. Arnie shook his head.

Sandy said, "What?"

"Listen, Sandy, you gotta send some boys down here with something big enough to kill this thing."

"I don't know, Ace, I better let you talk to the Chief. Hang on."

"Wait a minute ..."

"Click."

"Sucker put me on hold."

"Dang," said Arnie.

"Said he was going to put the Chief on."

"Click ... Hello Ace."

"Hey, Chief."

"Now Ace, what's this all about?"

"Well, sir, there's this big old grass shark out in the yard and Arnie and myself, we're trapped in the house, here."

"How big is this shark, son?"

"Looks to be about eighteen, maybe twenty foot, Chief."

"Now Ace, you know grass sharks just don't grow to be more than about two foot. You ever hear of one bigger than that?"

"Well, no sir, I haven't. But it did eat my dog."

"What, old Stretch?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well there you go, Ace. There ain't never been a grass shark big enough to eat old Stretch, and you know it."

"Yes, sir."

"I expect a car got him. Sorry to hear it, too. Old Stretch was a good dog, even if he wasn't the brightest."

"Yes, sir. Thank-you, sir."

"Now Ace, I want you and Arnie to take it easy out there, have a beer, relax."

"Yes, sir."

"And let's not have any more of this nonsense about twenty-foot grass sharks."

"No, sir."

"All right, Ace, we'll see you."

"Bye, Chief." I hung up the phone. "Boy, that's a relief."

"What is?" asked Arnie.

"Chief said there is no such thing as a grass shark big enough to eat old Stretch. Said a car probably got him."

"Boy, am I glad to hear that," said Arnie. "Say, you want a beer?"

"Sure."

"You know, I've been thinking about getting myself another dog," I said. Arnie said something I could not understand due to distance and obstacles. "What?"

His face appeared in the wheel well. "I said, try and see if you can get one with a little more in the way of brains this time," he laughed.

"That shouldn't be too tough," I smiled.

Meanwhile out in the yard, squirrels and small sharks played in the sunlit grass.

# HONSHU

(continued from page 61)

terflies fluttering in glades no man had haunted before), unexpected emerald meadows, sheets of snow a month of walking did not dismiss, and in the distance always more mountains, more deserts, the whole world then tasting of vastness as of nectar, glistening, men huddling in mud nests like wasps, the spaces innocent. He had walked because, obscurely, His Father had told Him to. His Father was an imperious restlessness within Him. At last He came to the land of Wa, beyond which was only an enamelled sea without a nether edge. The sage of Etchu took Him in and taught Him many things. He taught the young Jesus that dual consciousness was not to be avoided but desired: only duality reflected the universe. That the eight hundred myriads of daemons (*yao-yorodzu-no-kami*) are false save in that they stand guard against an even more false monism. That the huntsman must bend his thoughts upon the prey and not upon the bow. That a faith containing fear is an imperfect faith. That the mountains wait to be moved by the touch of a child. That the motions of the mind are full of *Kami* (gods/force). That the ways of the holy (*shintō*) are the ways of plants. That a seed must die to live. That the weak are the strong. And many more such things He later preached, and forgot, as the ice cake deposits pebbles and straw in melting. After eleven years, the restlessness seized Him again, and He returned. The trip returning, strangely, was the more difficult of the two; he kept searching for familiar landmarks, and there were none.

Jesus returned to Jerusalem, passing through Monaco on the way, to tell his own people of his experiences in the Orient, it is said. It was his younger brother, known in Japanese as Isukiri, who was later crucified, according to the legend.

No one ever got it quite right, and He Himself ceased trying to understand. Judas (Isukiri) had not been His brother; he had been the troublesomely sensitive disciple, the cloying adorer. Selecting the twelve,

Jesus had chosen solid men, to whom a miracle was a way of affecting matter, a species of work. Judas, with his adoration and high hopes and theoretical demands on the Absolute, had attached himself hysterically. The kiss in the garden was typical—all showmanship and symbolism. Then, the priesthood proving obdurate (and why not? any Messiah at all would put them out of a job), Judas had offered to be crucified instead, as if we were dealing with some Moloch that had a simple body quota to meet. The poor Romans were out of their depth; eventually they hanged Judas, as they generally hanged informers—a straightforward



policy of prudence. For Him, there had been nails in the palms, and a crying-out, and then dark coolness, a scuffle in which He overheard women's voices, and a scarlet dawn near the borders of Palestine. For the first days eastward, until the wounds in His feet healed, He had had an escort. He dimly remembered. Gruff men, officials of some sort.

Jesus is said to have escaped and come back to Japan after wandering through the wastes of Siberia. The legend has it that he landed at Hachinoe in Aomori, and settled in Herai, whose name, it has been suggested, derives from the Japanese for Hebrew (*Heburai*). He married and became the father of three daughters, according to the legend.

Asagao was the oldest, Oigimi the youngest; both married before the age of fifteen, and in them and their children He saw no trace of Himself, only of His wife and the smooth race that had taken Him in as a pond swallows a stone. Ukifune, the middle daughter, called Dragonfly, was tall

like Him, with His wrinkled lids and big-knuckled hands and surges of restlessness and mockery. She never married; her scandals affronted the village until she was found dead in her hut, black-lipped, cold. He would have called her back to life, but her face had been monstrously slashed. Poisoned and disfigured by a lover or the wife of a lover. She left a fatherless male infant, Kaoru. Shared between the households of his aunts, the infant grew to be a man, living always in the village, as a mender of nets and thatching. Conscious of himself only as Japanese, Kaoru grew old, with white hair and warts, and Jesus, now over a hundred, would suddenly, senselessly, weep to see in this venerable grandson—hook-nosed profile bent above a chisel, his forearms as gnarled as grapevines—the very image of old Joseph of Bethlehem, seen upwards through the eyes of a child. Things return, form in circles, unravel and reravel, the sage had insisted, crouching with the young traveller on a ledge in the mauve mountains of Etchu, in view of the enamelled sea. Jesus had argued, insisting that there was also a vertical principle in the world, something thrusting, which did not repeat. Now, Himself ancient, He had come to live the sage's scorned truth. He lived in the village as a healer, and the healed kept coming back to Him, their health unravelled, and again He would lay on His hands, and the devils would flee, and the healed would depart upright and rejoicing; only to unravel again, and at last to die, even as He must. A soft heaviness sweetened His veins; His naps lengthened unaccountably. As death neared, His birth and travail far ago, in that minor desert place, among Rome's centurions, seemed more and more miraculous: a seed He had left behind, and that had died, engendering a growth perhaps as great as a mustard tree. Or perhaps His incarnation there, those youthful events, were lost in the scuffle of history, dust amid dust. Whatever the case, He never doubted that He was unique, the only son of God. In this, at least, He resembled all men.

One family in the village says it is descended from Jesus. Many of the children have the star of David sewn on their clothes, and parents sometimes mark the sign of the cross in ink on the foreheads of children to exorcise evil spirits. . . . An annual "Christ festival," held on June 10, attracts many visitors. ■

# EXERCISE

(continued from page 31)

thing points to the fact that like any good shepherd I shall have to lead my flock by example, steer them onto the path of righteous wickedness, and bring forth the fire of a new god from the embers of the old. By example ... and by the word that will spring from that example. Yes, yes! Finally a fit topic for a sermon, a fit occasion to commemorate. Smiling, my clouded sense of purpose in focus at last, I fling open the door to Serena's room, startling her. She rolls onto her back, her Naughty Girl nightie riding up over her thighs.

"Geez, Frankie," she says. "You look ..." She tips her head to the side, searching apparently for an appropriate term or word. "Different or something."

Could my illumination have worked a physical change? Anything is possible, I suppose. I study my reflection in the mirror backing the door, but see nothing out of the ordinary ... except in the measure of my self-regard. I realize now that for months I have avoided mirrors, not wanting to view the hapless soul shriveling in my flesh. But that soul is not in evidence. In my mirror image I perceive confidence, a lion's-worth of confidence. And intent. Oh, I am ripe to bursting with intent.

"What you see before you," I say, turning to Serena, "is a man grown suddenly great with conviction."

Serena giggles and pats the mattress beside her. "Well, don't waste it Frankie. Come on over 'fore it shrinks back to normal."

Saturday night, the last pallid light of an ashen day illuminating the stained-glass windows, and candles burning steadily on the altar, flanking a silver cross of a size suitable for the crucifixion of a small child. Separated from Serena and the Church of Fleshly Delights, my conviction—as Serena playfully intimidated—has shrunk. I am nervous, full of doubt. Yet my intent remains firm. Doubt-ridden or not, I will do the deed. And as Marge enters through the front door, I slip the bolt into place, securing us within an unknown country, one whose boundaries we are soon to define. The snick of the bolt makes her jump, but I smile

reassuringly. "Burglars," I say. "Or mischievous choirboys." She smiles in return, relaxing.

With a sly wink toward the lion, I lead her back into the rectory, which is attached by a corridor to the choir's dressing room, and I sit her down on the red velvet sofa. Her hair is sewn with glints by the dim track lighting, her lips are redder than the velvet, gleaming curves, and in the cleavage of her frock I spot a inch of lace. One button more than usual undone. The final signal, Marge. I will not fail you.

I offer wine, she demurs, I insist. The wine is the same pale red of her hair, and as she sips, I enjoy the con-

*My flock seems  
edgy. The moment is  
near. Indignation  
and anger are  
creeping into  
their expressions.  
But I am not  
concerned. The  
truth will set  
them free.*

ceit that she is tasting her own substance. I sit beside her, not too close, not too far. A seductive distance, yet I disguise a tempter's propinquity with sincere concern, listening to complaints about her Jeffrey.

"He's been gone almost two weeks this time," she says. "And he swore he wouldn't be back."

Thank you, Jeffrey.

"He'll be back," I say, stroking her arm. "Don't worry." Not a flinch from Marge, only a shy glance.

"I know you're right," she says.

"But ..."

"Yes?"

This will sound awful, Reverend, but ...

"Franklyn," I say. "Please call me Franklyn."

"All right." Wan smile. "Franklyn." She sighs, and a curve of white flesh swells above the lace. "As I was saying, this will sound awful, but I'm not sure I want him back."

I pretend to be in a deep study. "It's not awful in the least," I say. "You've endured too much from him already."

She stares into her wine glass as if

seeking an oracle. "I don't know."

"Marge," I begin.

She looks at me, startled.

"Forgive my familiarity," I say, drinking in those delicate features. "It's just I feel close to you, in your confidence."

"No, no. It's all right."

"Marge," I continue. "You've been married how long ... almost ten years, isn't it?"

A nod.

"To stay and suffer more abuse would be foolhardy."

"I suppose, but it's not so simple a question. I'm afraid I might be leaving him for the wrong reason." This last accompanied by a flush.

"I see." And I do see: Marge is close to an admission. I pretend awkwardness. "I ... uh." Clear my throat. "May I ask if there's someone else?"

She lowers her head, and this time the nod is almost imperceptible.

"You have strong feelings for this other man?"

"Yes."

"Love is nothing to be ashamed of, Marge. Not in your case, not given the loveless circumstance of your house. You have to seize what joy you can, you have to obey the imperatives of your heart."

I have planned a long drawn-out seduction, but fired by my own words I shift closer, our thighs nearly touching, and lean to her. "Marge," I say. "I know, I know."

She tries to harden her face, but melts. "I can't," she says. "I'm not sure." But her mouth opens to me. I undo a button, and she arches beneath my hands. Inch by inch the frock divides, and my palms glory in the weight of her breasts. I whisper, telling her of my long desire. I slide one strap of her slip off her shoulder, bury my face in softness. Feel her tense.

"No!" she says, pushing my head away. "No, please."

"Don't be afraid," I tell her, and burrow in again.

"No!" She yanks at my hair, beats a fist against my shoulder, and I realize that we have reached the point that Serena in her wisdom predicted. Now is the proof of conviction, the honing of intent into action. I rip away the last buttons, and Marge screams, tries to claw me. But I beat her hands aside, and drag her from the sofa and into the bedroom.

"Go ahead," I say, panting. "Scream. No one will hear. You're going to get what you came for, witch!"

The venom in my voice astounds me, as does the epithet. It hardly

seems that it was I who spoke. But I put it from mind and address her in a gentler fashion.

"It'll be sweet, Marge. You'll see. After tonight there'll be no regrets, no recriminations." All the while, I'm lashing her wrists and legs to the bedposts with four lengths of rope. Odd . . . I don't recall having cut them. Ah, well. In some fugue I must have foreseen the determination underlying her recalcitrance. "Witch," I realize, is a most fitting term. For though I have seen her form by day, humble and gentle, slightly to the moral eye, even then I glimpsed the hidden form that now confronts me: a voluptuous figure that might adorn a Tarot card, with hair and rags blown to cover her nakedness by a wind that one but her can feel. She looks at you—as Marge is looking at me this moment—with terror and anxiety, and you know her name is Woman, frail and sweet, demanding guidance. Yet penetrating that glaze of fear, you make out another eye, blue and calm, regarding you with measured appraisal, and you understand that the name of this interior self is Reason. Oh, she has many names, and none are wholesome, for all are funded by that last interior creature, that fuming golden thing with eyes as blank as suns, who stands in the scorched circle of the Devil's gaze, exposing to him the charms with which she seeks to govern all men, and it is she who is the Great Lie, the embodiment of intoxicating and corrupting principle, and her name, the men speak with awe and longing, unaware of its enervating effects, her name is Love . . .

I feel a touch of dizziness and pinch the bridge of my nose in an attempt to stem it. The tenor of my thoughts disturbs me, yet I chalk them up to the extreme nature of my actions, the conflict between their necessity and the disciplines instilled in me at the seminary; it would be surprising if I were not somewhat disoriented. I stare down at Marge. Lashed tightly in the remnants of her clothing, heaving up from the bed, she is a pretty sight, and while I undress, I talk to her . . . No, I make purring, rumbling comments that are less speech than animal promises. Then, kneeling between her legs, I find that despite her protestations, reduced now to wimpers, the witch is ready for our consummation.

After I'm done, I sit naked with pen and paper at my writing desk, and, un mindful of Marge's pleading, begin the creation of my next day's

sermon. I have never felt so capable, so filled with thunderous verbal potential.

"I won't tell," says Marge. "I won't tell anyone. Just let me go." In the half-light her breasts gleam pale, inspiring me further. I choose my text and scribble a brief introduction.

"I swear," says Marge, and breaks into sobs.

Exasperated, I let out a sigh and set down my pen. My duty as lover must pre-empt my priestly duty for awhile; I must finish Marge's instruction, bring her wholly into the realm of the senses, unravel that dark knot in her breast that I have only begun to loosen. "Darling," I say as I enter her again. "This,



too, shall pass." Though she twists her head aside, though she affects revulsion, her cry is of pleasure not a pain. She cannot fool me. I am expert in these matters.

I alternate bouts of lovemaking and sermon-writing. The two pursuits, I understand, are linked, and I come from each renewed and eager for more of the other. Marge tries every ploy to deny her feelings, to cousin me into releasing her. For a time she pretends to pretend enjoyment, thinking to tempt me into untying her, not knowing I perceive her true ecstasy, her absolute involvement, her delight in the bonds. I let her know that I am not persuaded by instructing her in several of the exotic practices I have picked up at the brothel in Corn River, disciplines foreign to Marge, yet ones to which she swiftly adapts, growing ever more silent in contemplation of the new sensations she experiences. And in that silence, the dark construct of her secret sin starts to lose conformation, to send out threads through her flesh and spirit. By first light she is all but its embodiment, and had I another hour before the service, I would be able to complete the work I

have begun. But both it and she will wait. I check her bonds, kiss her on the brow, look onto her staring eyes, wide-open in the study of that internal unraveling. A bit vacant I think. But her color is good, she will mend. Yes, the witch will bless my name for this night of liberation.

Eleven o'clock, and showered, serene in a freshly starched surplice, I stand behind the griffin's ebony beak, gazing out over the congregation, listening to thunder, watching the rainy light penetrate the segments of stained glass, spreading a gray gloom over all. My flock seems edgy, no doubt the result of my minute-long consideration of the words I am about to speak. Soon, though, they will be relaxed as never before, freed from the bonds of propriety to enact their sly wishes. I smile, nod, and they glance nervously at one another. It may be that—as do I—they sense some vast imminence. At last, resting my hands on the griffin's head, I begin.

"The first part of my text for today," I say, "is taken from the French poet and playwright, Atonin Artaud."

This causes a general stirring . . . not that Artaud and his cabalistic creed are known in Fallon, but it unsettles them that I should stray from my usual course.

"Do evil," Artaud says. "Do evil and commit many sins. But do no evil to me." I allow no time for a reaction, but launch into the body of the sermon. "This direct instruction might be taken for a mis-statement on the Golden Rule, but in truth it implies the essence of the rule, it gives a new reading of that truth appropriate to our time. For we are all evil, are we not? Whatever good resides in us, it is mediated by a quantity of evil, and locked together these two forces intertwine and darken in us, until in the end one and alone establishes dominion. We may by force of habit effect good works, love a good life, sin only minimally, yet mostly we are not impelled to behave thus by the empowering radiance of good, but rather by the fear of admitting to evil, of facing it and giving it its due. We have been taught that to master evil we must suppress it. And this is wrong. The act of suppression twists us. We become vessels filled with repressed desires and needs that without light 'grow into gnarled and mutant shapes.'"

Rustling everywhere. Women whispering together; men sitting expressionless, refusing to confront their discomfort; a child giggling.



# EXERCISE

"This," I go on, "brings me to the second part of my text, a quote from the magus Aleister Crowley. 'Do what thou wilt be the whole of the law.'"

The rustling increases, but I pay it no heed.

"Crowley was not advising us to rape and murder, to do unnatural deeds. Rather he was encouraging us to liberate our evil natures, to give vent to sin before it can grow great and malignant. And Artaud: '... do no evil to me.' This bespeaks a comprehension that evil thus vented rarely involves a crime with a victim, that it expresses itself in mild forms such as lust. Once expressed, then our good works—when we attempt them—become the products of a true saintly intent and not of fear."

The word "lust" might have been a needle thrust into the bony rump of every old woman in the church, for they all sit up straight, fully attentive and unanimously grim. My fingers clench the griffin's skull, and I feel a force surging through the black wood. The stained-glass animals twitch in their rectangular confines. The moment is near. I lean forward, becoming folksy, gentling my tone.

"We of St. Mary's are much blessed." I nod, imbuing the gesture with a thespian measure of sagacity. "Much blessed. For our sins, though multiplicitous and diverse, have each a complement among our body. And so we need not venture out into the world and risk humiliation in order to express our desires. We need only do what we have always done, and that is, trust in the fellowship. Here amidst friends and neighbors, we can bare our secrets ... and not merely bare them, but indulge them with those whose secrets are partner to our own. Here we can share joy and pleasure free from spying eyes and moral judgments, and in so doing find the new meaning of God."

Indignation and anger are creeping into their expressions, but I am not concerned. The truth will set them free.

"I know your sins," I say. "I know them as you believe only you know them. There is no reason for shame in this place. Here you may admit and openly engage those forbidden pass-

times of which you have long dreamed. Join me now in an act of liberation, empty yourselves of the vile. Taste and touch and know the flavors and textures of freedom." I pause to let them absorb my meaning, to let them prepare for what will come. "I have chosen this day to introduce you one to the other, sin to compatible sin, desire to desire. This morning we will initiate our adventure in the purient, and bring God's bud to bloom in an exaltation of joyous camaraderie."

I favor them all with a loving gaze; their agitation and discomfort compels me to cut short my preamble. I will not allow them to suffer more

*Thunder. The scent of ozone as lightning cracks the sky. The walls are trembling and all the stained-glass animals are pacing in their windows.*

the imprisonment of joy. "Miles Elbee," I say, "meet Cory Eubanks. Submissive meet dominatrix." A gasp from the back row where pretty, plump Cory sits with her husband. "No need for alarm, Cory," I cry. "No need to hide those black leathers and spike heels in the closet any longer, for in Miles you have one who will bleed for you, who will crawl to kiss the braided tip of your whip."

Miles jumps to his feet, sputtering, and the stunned pale faces of the rest are fixed on me.

"Emily Prideau," I say. "Meet Billy Taggart, Joey Grimes, and Ted Dunning. Their dream, like yours, entails a three on one, the Holy Trinity made flesh."

Emily ducks her head into her mother's arm, but the boys smirk and nudge one another.

"Carlton Dedaux," I shout above the growing babble. "Meet little Jimmy Newly. Look into each other's eyes and see the wet imprint of you kindred lusts."

They are all standing, shaking fists, berating me as I continue to make my introductions. My voice falt-

ers. Could I have been wrong? It seems so. How can I have misjudged their temper, their readiness for the new?

Miles Elbee strides to the base of the pulpit. "You son of a bitch!" he screeches. "The bishop's going to hear about this! I'll ..."

Anger forks through me, and I lean down to him. "Go ahead," I say. "The bishop's underwear is the same brand as yours, only his lace trim is a bit more provocative."

Miles glances at his waist to see if anything is showing, then backs away, cursing at me. Other men, Emily's father among them, are being restrained from attack by their fellows, and the women are streaming out the door. Children are laughing, playing tag around the baptismal font. The entire concept of spiritual advancement is in disarray, the revolution I have envisioned is overthrown before it is begun.

They bunch at the front door, looking back at me, and as the last of them exits, hopelessness takes the place of my anger. A rock splinters the window of the old bear, shattering for once and all his search for a honeyed philosophy. Someone calls to me, accusing me of evil as if evil were something I have avoided confronting. They did not hear a single word I spoke.

I step down from the pulpit, walk along the aisle and slump into a pew beneath the lion, whose expression now seems one of disapproval or—at least—of stern judgment. He is right to think badly of me. Not only have I failed in my intent, I have lost my sinew. What, I wonder, awaits me? Will I join the homeless, wandering the streets, my possessions in a Hefty bag? No, no, it will be worse than that. There's Marge to consider, after all. I doubt she will be forgiving in the face of my failure to enlist the congregation. An asylum, perhaps. Possibly jail. I think I would prefer the penitential solitude of jail to the gibbering complexities of straitjackets and Thorazine and electroshock.

Outside, the gray light darkens, and the eyes of the lion grow balled and leaden. Thunder, the scent of ozone as lightning cracks the sky with a ripping sound, starting me from my morose reverie, alerting me to a change in the atmosphere, in—it seems—the very fabric of reality. Steam is billowing from the griffin's snout, the walls are trembling, and except for the lion, all the stained-glass animals are pacing in their windows. I jump up, amazed. This is what I expected at the

culmination of my sermon, at the conjoining of my flock. How can it be ... I have failed, have I not? And then comprehension dawns. I see it clearly now. My sermon was not the event essential to provoke this change, or if it was, it was only the spark and not the true burning. And I see, too, that I have not failed. Oh, my flock will publicly disavow what I revealed, will disparage me. However, after the scandal dies down, they will look around at one another, recalling my list of sins and compatibilities, and slyly at first, then more openly, they will seek each other out for the purposes in which I have instructed them. But what of the burning that must take place before this can come to pass? Suddenly dismayed, I sit back in the pew. Maybe I am seeing things, maybe nothing will happen, maybe griffin is not writhing, tossing his ebony-feathered head, and maybe ... A noise behind the choir-stall, a white shape moving in the shadows.

Marge!

Naked, with shreds of rope trailing from her wrists and something shiny in her hand.

On spotting me, she freezes, then starts forward, haltingly at first, but growing more assured with every step. Her eyes are black, no whites showing whatsoever, ovals of griffin-color, and as she descends from the altar to the aisle, she raises a shining knife high.

For an instant I am afraid, and I start to come to my feet, thinking to run to take the weapon from her. But a moment later understanding banishes fear. Of course, of course! Everything is plain to me. As with the birth of every new religion, a sacrifice is necessary. I've been a fool not to anticipate this, and now that my fate is at hand, I rejoice, because I also understand that for me death will be liberation. That it has ever been the one means by which I might elude the gravities of the ordinary. Marge is speaking to me in some pagan tongue, some evil parlance, drooling spittle, and from this evidence and that of her pupil-less eyes, I reach a further understanding. I have been hasty in debunking the myth of Jeremy and his victims, short-sighted in assuming that the supernatural would play no part in the infinite congruency of events and moments essential to the creation of divinity. It's an obvious truth that every fleck and fragment of the past must be represented in this seminal act. Marge's aspect is unshakeable evidence of witchy possession, a spirit given purchase by the trauma of rape,

(perhaps this was the knot within her, no real thing itself, but rather a nest in which an incubus could lodge); and recalling my venomous abuse of her, seeing in new light the particular definition of my madness, it is apparent that Jeremy and I are more closely connected than by tradition alone.

Marge stops beside me, the knife trembling above, and with her sweaty breasts heaving, her deep sin unraveled and leaking forth, never has she seemed more beautiful; an object of pure license, pure chaotic principle.

"Ah ... ah!" she says, seeking to translate the dictates of her Satanic duty into words I will understand, unaware that my understanding is at last complete.

"Do what you must," I say, fixing my gaze on the lion. Why does he refuse to bless me with his powerful knowledge? Soon it will be too late.

Another incoherent gasp from Marge, a spit-filled sound that seems to me redolent of frustration, of some internal struggle.

"No reason to feel remorse," I say.

Our eyes meet, our darknesses commingle, and I turn away, rapt in contemplation of my release, yet not wanting to witness the downward arc of the instrument of release. Several seconds slip by, and I begin to worry that some human weakness is restraining her.

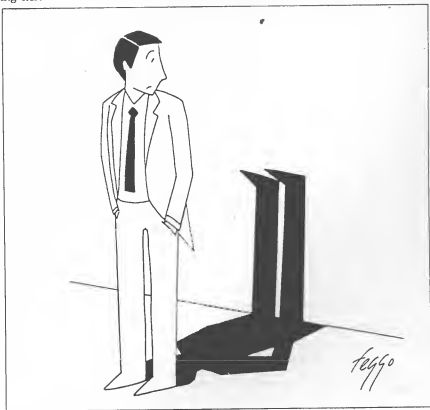
"Hurry, Marge," I tell her.

"You ... uh ..." she says, her hand scrabbling at my shoulder. "You!"

She needs encouragement, needs to know that I welcome this ending, that I comprehend the requirements of divine resolution.

"Marge," I say. "You have never seemed so desirable as now. How much I truly love you."

A shriek breaks from her lips, and I feel the force of her firmed commitment in the instant before the knife sinks home. The pain is sharp, the shock all-absorbing. Yet there is sweetness in the pain, in the strength it dredges up, the profound confidence it rips loose from the recesses of my being. I refuse to fall, I want to savor every instant of my passage, to know everything left to know. The griffin howls, a long keening note, and I feel wetness on my chest. Truth is everywhere, the church is black with God. I am not dying, I realize. In some element of that dark force, I will continue. Like Jeremy, I will go and on, the shadow of a shadow, the hint of a spectacular possibility. Marge strikes again, weakness overwhelms me. My heart—though pierced—is glad, my soul at peace. And as I topple sideways on the pew, looking up to the window glowing with supernal light, the stained-glass lion—always my favorite—lifts its head and roars. ■



# WOLF/ CHILD

(continued from page 35)

the bullocks was a deep meaty smell. The smell of the cart was sharp, but there was something slightly familiar about it, too.

The she-wolf sniffed one more time, then loped back to her cubs. At her bark they rose and followed. She was careful to avoid the broken grasses and the cart smell, which offended her nose. The deep meat smell bespoke of an animal too large for a single wolf to handle. She knew they would have to range further.

But after coursing the jungle with the cubs for most of the night, the she-wolf had still made no kill. There would be no good eating this night. She shepherd them back to the white ant mound where, after nuzzling them all, she allowed them to suck until they were full.

The men of Raman's village ran out to greet the cart through green clumps of bamboo that hid the adobe-and-thatch houses. Much to Geoffrey's embarrassment, the men insisted on washing the visitors' feet, but the colonel took it with a certain graciousness.

"Let them do it, Geoffrey," he said placidly. "It does no harm, and it certainly keeps them in their place. But stop blushing, boy. Your face is too wide open. It's like a damned girl's."

After the washing, they replaced their socks and boots, and threaded their way down the packed dirt street, the colonel greeting everyone with a kind of official *bonhomie* that Geoffrey found himself envying. Raman strode ahead to announce them. With the noise of the cart and the bellowing of the bewildered bullock and the nasal whine of *narh* pipes, it was a wild processional.

Near the end of the village was a rather larger hut, and this, Raman assured them, was where the most welcome visitors would stay. The carters would be put up elsewhere. Two women in white saris with brass pichers on their hips nodded as Geoffrey got down from the cart. The colonel was last to dismount and as his feet touched the ground, there was a low admiring murmur. He smiled.

"Ask them, Geoffrey, what time dinner is served."

Dinner was served immediately, and though the English retired early, the villagers stayed up well into the night entertaining the carters with rice beer and Raman's boasts about how the colonel would kill the *manush-baghas* the next day.

When they woke in the morning, quite early according to Geoffrey's watch, the village day had already begun.

The mohua tree loomed over the clearing like an ancient giant, its trunk crisscrossed with claw marks. All day the noise of hammers and the shouts of men dominated the clearing.

*Gregory followed uneasily. He shuddered, though he did not know why. The clearing suddenly seemed filled with an alien presence, a darkness he could not quite name.*

but the she-wolf and her cubs did not hear them. They were deep in the den, sealed off by sleep and the twisting tunnels of the white ant mound. By dusk when they were ready to go out into the woods to hunt, the men were long departed. Only the *machan*, some twenty feet up the mohua tree, gave mute evidence that they had been there. That and the scattered pieces of wood and broken branches.

The she-wolf, in the darkness of her den, stretched and stood. Two of the cubs were awake before her and they danced around her legs until she cuffed one of them still. Roughly she licked awake the other three. The smallest of the hairless cubs whimpered for a moment, but at last she too stood.

They scampered around the winding tunnel until they came to the entrance. Then they waited until the she-wolf went out first into the darkening world.

Three miles from the village was the clearing where the *manush-baghas* had been sighted.

"Always at dusk, sahib," ex-

plained Raman. "Only at dusk."

That was why the villagers had gone on ahead early in the day to build a *machan*, a shooting platform, in the only large tree in the clearing, an ancient mohua. They had finished the makeshift *machan* by noon, and had hurried home, feeling terribly brave and proud.

Picking up his smoothbore, the colonel turned to Geoffrey. "Well, it's up to us now."

Geoffrey nodded. "Raman will take us to the clearing," he said, "but he will not stay the night. He is too afraid."

"Well, tell him we are not afraid. We are English," Geoffrey told him.

"And tell him he should come in the morning with several others and we shall have his *manushie* for him." The colonel smiled. "Do you have that cage out of the cart? We shall have to carry it there. Don't want the noise of that blasted cart to scare away the ape. Raman shall have to carry it."

Geoffrey nodded and turned to give the instructions to Raman and the others who had gathered to see them off. Then, in a modest processional, quite unlike the one of the evening before, they went down the packed dirt road and off to the west.

There was much more of a path at first, and even when the path gave way to hacked jungle, so many men had been there just hours before, the walking was easy. Raman, who shouldered the cage without complaint, slipped easily along the walkway, and they followed, reaching the clearing well before dusk.

Some thirty yards from the mohua tree, near a stand of blackthorn, was a termite mound that looked very much like an Indian temple. Next to it were the remains of another mound that had been destroyed by the last rainy season.

"There, sahib, that is where the man-ghost lives," whispered Raman, letting the cage off his back and wrestling it to the foot of the mohua tree. "At night it will come. The *manush-bagha*."

"Very good, Raman. You may go now," said the colonel. He chuckled as Raman took him literally and fled the clearing. "Well, well," the colonel added. He walked over to the termite mound and walked around it slowly and thoughtfully.

"Would an ape live in there?" asked Geoffrey unconformably.

"Would a ghost?"

They circled the mound again, this time in silence. Then the colonel

noded his head back toward the mohua tree. When they were beneath it, the colonel looked up. "Time to settle ourselves," he said.

Leaving the lantern at the foot of the tree, the colonel climbed up the rope ladder first and Geoffrey followed.

"I think," the colonel said, when they were settled on the wooden platform, "that the drill now is no more talking. Load your gun, my boy, and then we will sit watch."

They finished their few preparations and then sat silently, eyes trained on the white ant mound. Geoffrey had to fight off the impulse to swing his legs over the side of the *machan*, which reminded him of a tree fort he and his brothers had built in an ancient oak beside his Maivern home.

The darkness moved in quietly, casting long shadows. The hum of the cicadas was mesmerizing, and they both had to shake their heads frequently to stay awake.

And then, suddenly, something moved by the mound, near a plum bush. Head up, sniffing the air, a full-grown wolf emerged.

Geoffrey felt a hand on his arm, but he did not look around. Slowly he raised his gun as the colonel raised his, and they waited.

Three cubs scampered around the bush. One dashed toward the blackthorn and a sharp yip from the she-wolf recalled him. The cubs scuffled at their mother's feet.

And then, as if on a signal, they all stopped playing and looked at the plum bush.

Geoffrey drew in a deep breath that was noisy only to his own ears. The colonel did not move at all.

From behind the bush a small childlike form came forth. It had an enormous bushy head and its honey arms and legs were knobbed and scarred.

"The ape!" whispered the colonel as he fired.

His first shot hit the she-wolf on the shoulder, spinning her around. At the noise, woods pigeons rose up from the trees, their wings making a clacketing sound. The colonel's second shot blew away half the wolf's head, from the ear to the muzzle. He leaped up, shaking the *machan*, crowing, "Got her!"

The three cubs disappeared back behind the bush, but the *manushy-bagha* went over to the wolf's body and pawed at it mournfully. Then it dipped its face into the blood and, raising the bloody mask toward the

mohua tree, found Geoffrey's eyes. Unaccountably he wanted to weep. Then the creature put its head back and howled.

"Shoot it!" the colonel said. "Geoffrey, shoot it!"

Geoffrey lowered his gun and shook his head. "It's a child, colonel," he whispered as the creature scuttled off behind the plum bush. "A child."

"Ah, you bloody fool," the colonel said in disgust. "Now we shall have to track it." Gun in hand, he clambered awkwardly down the rope ladder and strode over to the bush. Geoffrey followed uneasily.

Poking his gun into the bush, the



colonel let out a short, barking laugh. "There's a hole here, Geoffrey. Come see. An entrance of some kind. Ha-ha! They've gone to ground."

Geoffrey shuddered, though he did not know why. The clearing suddenly seemed filled with an alien presence, a darkness he could not quite name. He knew night came quickly in the jungle once the sun began its descent, but it was more than that. The clearing was very still.

The Colonel had begun ripping away the branches that obscured the hole, his gun laid by. "Come on, Geoffrey, give us a hand."

Geoffrey put his own gun down, and found himself whispering a prayer he had learned so many years ago in the little stone church near his home, a prayer against "the waiters in the dark." Then he bent to help the colonel clear away the bush.

The hole did not go plumb down but was a tunnel on the slant, heading back toward the termite mound. After a moment of digging with his hands, the colonel straightened up.

"There!" he said pointing to the mound. "It's a bolt hole from that

thing. I'll guard this hole, Geoffrey, and you go and start digging out that mound."

Reluctantly, Geoffrey did as he was told. The termite mound stood higher than his head and when he tried to scrape away the dirt, he found it was hardened from the days and months in the rain. He cast around and found a large branch that had fallen from one of the blackthorn trees. With a mighty swing, he sent the branch crashing into the mound, decapitating the mound and shattering the stick.

Scrambling up the side, he peered down into the mound but it was still too dark to see much, so he pulled away great handfuls of dirt from the inside out. After frantic minutes of digging, he had managed to carve the mound down until it was a waist high pit.

The colonel came over to help. "I've blocked off that bolt hole," he said. "They won't be getting out that way. What do you have?" His face was slick with sweat and there were two dark spots on his cheeks, as if he burned with fever.

Geoffrey was too winded to talk, and pointed to the pit. But just then complete darkness closed in, so the colonel made his way back to the foot of the mohua where he found the lantern. It flared into light and sent trembling shadows leaping about the mound. When he held it directly over the open pit, they could make out five forms—the three cubs and not one but two of the apelike creatures wrapped together into a great monkey ball. At the light, they all buried their heads except for the largest. That one looked up, glaring into the light, its eyes sparkling a kind of red fire. Lifting its lips back from large yellow teeth, it growled.

The colonel laughed. "I'll stay here and guard this bunch. They won't be going anywhere. You run back to the village and get our carters. And that Ramanrithan fellow."

"They won't come here after dark," Geoffrey protested. "And which of us shall have the lantern?"

"Don't talk nonsense," the colonel said. "You take the lantern and tell them I've captured not one but two of their *manushies* and I'm not afraid to stay here in the dark with them. Tell those silly villagers they have nothing to fear. The British *Sahib* is on the job." He laughed out loud again.

"Are you sure ..." Geoffrey began.

"One of England's finest scared sil-

# WOLF/ CHILD

ly of three wolf cubs and a pair of feral children?" the colonel asked.

"Then you knew ..." Geoffrey began, wondering just when it was the colonel had realized they were not apes, and not wanting to ask.

"All along, Geoffrey," the colonel said. "All along." He patted the subaltern on the shoulder, a fatherly gesture that would have been out of place had they not been alone and in the dark clearing. "Now don't you get the willies, my boy, like those silly brown men. Color is the difference, Geoffrey. They've no stamina, no guts, and lots of bloody superstitions. Run along, and fetch them back."

Geoffrey picked up the lantern, shouldered his smoothbore, and started back down the path.

The cubs shivered together, trying to remember the feel of their mother's warmth, knowing something was missing. The little hairless cub cried out in hunger. But the larger one closed her eyes, playing back the moment when the she-wolf's head had burst apart like a piece of fruit thrown down by the langurs. She recalled the taste of the blood, both sweet and salt in her mouth. Turning her head slightly, she sniffed the air. Mother was gone but mother was here. There would be good eating tonight.

By the time Geoffrey could convince the villagers that the colonel had everything under control, it was already dawn and they were willing to come anyway. But they brought rakes and sticks for protection and made Geoffrey march on ahead.

The path had grown almost completely shut in the few hours since he had passed that way. He marveled at the jungle's constancy. Around him, the green walls hid an incredible prolix life, only now and again pulling aside

a viney curtain to showcase one creature or another.

The tight lacings of the sal above showed little light, only occasional streaks of sun. From far away he could hear the scolding of langurs moving through the treetops. Behind him the villagers muttered and giggled and it seemed much hotter than the day before.

When they got near the clearing, Geoffrey called out into the quiet, but the colonel did not answer. The men behind him began to talk among themselves uneasily. Geoffrey signalled them to be still, and moved on ahead.

By the termite mound lay a body.

Geoffrey ran over to it. The colonel lay as if he had been thrown down from a great height, yet there was nothing he might have been thrown down from. Horribly, his face and hands had been savaged, mutilated. "Eaten away," Geoffrey whispered to himself. Even the nose bone had been cracked. Yet remarkably, his clothing was little disturbed.

Turning aside, Geoffrey was quietly and efficiently sick, not caring if the villagers saw him. Then, wiping his mouth on his sleeve, he peered over into the mound. The cubs and the children were as he had left them, in that tight monkey ball, asleep. Thank God they had not been molested by whatever beast or beasts had savaged the colonel.

Bending over the mound, and crooning so as not to frighten them, Geoffrey pried away the littlest child and picked her up. The stink of her was ghastly, an unwashed carrion smell. She trembled in his arms. Patting her matted hair gingerly, he cuddled her in his arms and at last she stopped shivering and began to nuzzle at his neck, making a low almost purring sound. She weighed no more than one of his nieces, who were two and three years old.

"Here," Geoffrey called out to the villagers, his back to the colonel's mutilated corpse, "come see. It is only a child gone wild in the jungle. And there is another one here as well. We must take them home. Cleaned up they'll be just like other children." But when he looked over, he realized he spoke to an empty clearing as, from behind him, there came a strange and terrible growl.

She comforted the cubs who still trembled in the light, patting them and licking their fur. Deep in her throat she made the mother sound. "Very good eating today."



# BEACH

(continued from page 39)

expression.

"He's washed up again." She didn't sound as if she cared much.

"Let's go call the police then," I said.

She shook her head. "Please, stay down here and watch the body while I call. I don't want it to disappear again. I don't think I could take that a second time."

"All right."

She signed, then spoke quietly, more to herself than to me. "I should have known, there's no escape."

From what? I wondered. Karl? Or justice?

"Where is he?" I asked.

Jeanine didn't answer. She waved her arm, pointing vaguely, and started up the wooden stairs.

"Jeanine?"

She kept on. I turned away and walked towards the ocean. The flashlight's beam formed misting cones of light in the growing darkness. The night air was so silent, the fog muffling the waves, that I heard my boots crunch in the sand.

I couldn't find the body. I walked back and forth, from the dry sand down to the edge of the water, moving forward with each traverse so I could be sure I covered all the beach. There was no sign of the body, no indication Karl had ever been on the beach at all that night.

The cold was sinking into me again, a hard chill inching its way into my muscles and bones. I turned around and retraced my way back to the stairs, then searched the beach in the other direction. Still nothing. All my movements had become stiff with the cold. Christ, I thought, where was he?

Then I thought of Jeanine, upstairs calling the police. If they came out here again, and once more there wasn't a body, Jeanine was going to have serious problems. I hurried back towards the stairs and climbed them two steps at a time, though my legs ached, and my chest hurt from the cold air.

Inside the house, I found Jeanine seated in the front room chair, the phone in her lap, receiver cradled.

"Did you call the police?"

She shook her head, and did not look at me. She replaced the phone on the end table and hugged her knees to her chest.

"I couldn't find the body, Jeanine. He wasn't anywhere on the beach."

It was quiet, but she started to cry, and rocked herself slowly forward and back in the chair.

"Jeanine, what happened? Did you really see his body?"

She would not answer. Instead, she continued to rock and quietly cry, staring into the cold, dead fireplace. I gave up trying to get anything from her, and built a fire. When it was blazing, filling the room with heat, I



left her alone and went to the back of the house.

I took a shower to try to bring back some of the warmth I had lost, but again no matter how hot the water, nor how long I stayed in, there was no way to completely get rid of the cold.

Eventually, still chilled, I dried off, dressed, and went back to the front room. Jeanine had stopped crying, and held a drink in her hand.

"I have to tell you something," she said. "This whole thing, I just can't ... keep on ..." She shook her head and closed her eyes. She remained silent.

"Jeanine?" What was coming: a confession? The feeling was strong, almost a certainty.

"Nothing," she finally said. "Not now. Maybe tomorrow, I don't know." She opened her eyes. "Spend the night with me. Please, I can't stand the thought of sleeping alone tonight. No sex, nothing like that. I just ... I just need you to be with me."

I understood, and I agreed. I also

hoped she might be able to warm me, heat away the cold buried so deeply inside.

We undressed and crawled into bed together, pulling sheets and blankets tightly over us. I could tell there would be no warmth from her. For some reason it seemed as though Karl was in the room with us, in the bed. I felt I had become part of a bizarre *ménage à trois*, my partners a frozen woman and a dead man. Jeanine curled up next to me and I pulled her close, but she was so very cold, and it was a long time before I finally drifted off into uneasy sleep.

Next morning, when I woke, I was alone. I was still slightly chilled, and tired, but I felt better. It was early yet, and the fog was heavy outside. I got up and dressed, then went out into the kitchen.

Jeanine was nowhere in the house, and everything was quiet. I guessed she had gone for another walk. If she had, I hoped she wouldn't find Karl's body again; she'd probably go completely over the edge. I was beginning to think Karl's body would never be found. What had happened to him didn't seem so important now. Maybe I was afraid to learn the answers.

I boiled some water and made coffee, then took it out onto the deck. The wind had picked up and the fog swirled\* past, gusting occasionally. I stood at the deck railing, letting the steam from the coffee curl up and then blow away, and gazed out through the fog toward the ocean.

The fog broke for a few moments and gave me a glance of the water, then filled in again. The waves looked higher, and choppy. Maybe a storm was coming in.

Because of the wind, the fog was breaking up earlier than usual. Glimpses of the ocean became more frequent, longer. I drank my coffee, watching.

A larger clearing in the fog developed, held, and the dark object appeared again, bobbing in the chopping swells.

A damp chill shuddered through me and I leaned over the railing as though that would give me a better view. The fog drifted past in patches, but whenever it cleared I could see the object. It looked even darker than before, larger, somehow more solid. This time I just could not make myself believe it was my imagination.

Closer in, on the sand, a movement caught my eye. A patch of fog

# BEACH

obsured my view for a moment, then blew past. It was Jeanine. She was standing on the wet sand, nude, facing the oncoming waves. She seemed to be looking out directly at the dark object rising and falling with the swells. I watched her stand motionless for several minutes, her hair lifting in the breeze.

She took a step forward, paused, then took another. She remained motionless for another minute, just out of reach of the waves. She started to take a third step forward, then slowly turned her back on the sea and began to walk away from the water.

It could have been my imagination, but the next wave that broke seemed far larger than normal. The frothing water raced up the slope and swept past Jeanine, rising to her knees, halting her. She stood frozen as the water swirled around her legs. Then, as the water retreated, she dropped her head, turned, and walked purposefully into the sea.

The chill blossomed within me, and I moved. I knocked my coffee cup over the railing and ran for the beach. I took the steps two, sometimes three at a time, my chest pounding, the damp cold pulsing through me with each breath.

I reached the bottom of the stairs and hit the soft sand at a run, my motion slowed as my feet sank with each stride. Already Jeanine was in water above her waist, the waves breaking on her chest. She plunged into the face of a wave and started swimming for deep water.

I tore off clothes as I ran—jacket, sweater, shirt. I stopped long enough to jerk my boots off my feet, pulled off my jeans, and ran on.

By the time I reached the water, Jeanine was nearing the breakline, and I caught only occasional glimpses of her head bobbing, or an arm in mid-stroke. The water was cold but I hardly felt it, and I raced through it as fast as I could, air tearing my lungs. I reached waist-deep water, dove, and swam, pulling hard with my arms, kicking with all the strength I could call up in my legs.

Waves broke over me, slowing my progress, but I pressed on, the fear and the cold growing within me. I

kept my head above water, and once or twice I thought I saw Jeanine, but I couldn't be sure. I seemed to be gaining on her.

The last two waves were largest, but I dove under them, avoiding the brunt of their power. I rode over the hump of a wave about to crest, stroked twice, and was through the breakline.

The open water was rough, the swells capped with white. Treading water, riding swiftly up and down with the swells, I searched desperately for some clue, some movement, but there was no sign of Jeanine anywhere. As I dove in the hope of finding her, my foot struck something

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*She was standing  
on the wet sand,  
nude, facing the  
oncoming waves.  
She seemed to be  
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out at something  
rising and  
falling with the  
swells.*

---

hard and cold.

Fear shot through me; I kicked away, thrashing with my legs. Then I realized it might be Jeanine, struggling to surface. I turned back, swam a few strokes and, after a moment's hesitation, dove again.

The first time down, I felt nothing but cold, swirling water, and bits of seaweed; I could not open my eyes. On the second dive, a few feet under, my hand made contact. What I hit was like ice, though; it felt too cold to be a living person. Was it Jeanine? Or Karl's body? For a moment, fear paralyzed me, and I nearly shot up towards the surface, but I couldn't take the chance. I reached out, grabbed an arm near the shoulder, and kicked up towards the surface.

I jerked to an abrupt halt, the body unmoving as if anchored to the ocean floor. I kicked with both legs, pulled at the water with my free hand, but went nowhere; my hand, where I gripped the arm, went numb with the cold.

I nearly released the arm, then instead grabbed it with my other hand, and pulled. I began kicking frantically

and pulling at the arm, and we began to rise.

Suddenly, whoever it was I held started moving, thrashing in the water. I almost lost my grip, but tightened it, digging in with my fingernails, and continued kicking towards the surface, air pressing in my lungs for release.

As the body thrashed more violently, we rose more quickly. Twice more I faltered, but somehow I maintained my grip on the cold, slick skin, the cold seeping into my own hands, numbing them. Once, as I kicked, my foot struck something solid yet soft, cold ice with slime, just like what I'd felt on my last swim, and my leg deadened for a moment, became frozen. We started sinking again, but feeling slowly returned to the leg. I kicked several times very hard, and we rose once more. Amid thrashing arms and swirling bubbles I broke the surface of the sea, pulled the body up, and ...

It was Jeanine.

Her eyes were closed, but she made a harsh, gurgling cough, and dark water bubbled from her mouth. She thrashed at the foaming swells, at the cold air, at my face. Though I still held onto her with one hand, she began to sink again, weighed down by something massive and solid, something actively trying to pull her back down beneath the waves.

Jeanine continued to cough, struggling for breath, then abruptly opened her eyes. She stared at me, her eyes wide and dazzling with a wild light, and lunged, grabbed for my head with both arms.

I ducked under her arms, twisted her around so her back was to me, then wrapped my right arm across her chest and gripped her side. I kept her head above water as she coughed and gagged, and managed to control her struggles without sinking. I tried swimming towards shore, but something still seemed to be holding her, pulling her under, and we did not move.

"Karl!" she choked out. "I ... killed the bastard ... and he's ..." But she stopped, coughing up more water. Then something pulled her strongly from below, and dragged her under.

Just before I went under with her, I kicked hard twice and pulled, brought her back to the surface and held her there against the constant tugging from below. Jeanine continued coughing as I treaded water, and tried once or twice to say something, but I couldn't understand a word.

I knew I couldn't last much longer. My legs were tired, already in pain, and the cold of the water, of Jeanine's body, made the exhaustion worse. And something, or someone, still pulled at Jeanine, threatening to drag us both underwater, and whatever it was did not seem to be losing any strength at all.

There was only one chance, I thought. I drew in a breath, let her go, and went under, guiding myself down along her body and legs. I was hoping, I think, to free her from whatever would not release her.

But as I came to her feet, and reached out, my left hand struck that solid, rubbery cold again; my entire arm went numb, up to the shoulder, and I could not move it. I knew then that it would be my death to keep making contact with that cold, hard form in the water—was it Karl?—and for a moment I wondered if that was what I should do, join them in death there in the ocean. But I did not want to die, not for them, nor with them. Gripping Jeanine with my good arm, I kicked weakly back to the surface.

I managed slowly to pull her back to fresh air. But I knew it was only a temporary reprieve. I had little strength in either my good arm or my legs, and it wouldn't be long before I would not be able to get back to shore on my own.

I held onto her for another minute, maybe two, hoping something would happen, some freak accident would intervene. But Jeanine had given up—she no longer struggled, no longer tried to keep her head above water, and she mumbled incoherently with her eyes closed, as though praying. It was hopeless.

My strength faded quickly, and the force pulling at Jeanine seemed to increase. She went under once, I managed to pull her back up for a moment, but twisted herself free of my hold, pushed away from me, and went under again almost immediately.

Knowing I, too, would die if I stayed with her, I let her go, a sick feeling rising in my chest. She sank quickly, and I felt her slide down along my body, my weakly kicking legs. For a moment I felt her hand grab my ankle, either in a final attempt to survive, or in an attempt to take me down with her; but her fingers had no strength, and her grip loosened, and released me. Karl, or whatever it was below us, took final possession of her, and she was gone.

Barely able to keep my head above water, I started towards shore.

My arms and legs were stiff from the cold, my left arm almost useless, and all my movements were weak and stilted. Each time I kicked I expected my feet to strike something cold, clammy and hard, but I never did. Yet there was no more fear, no energy for panic, only a despair and a mindless, weary struggle to stay alive.

I felt the hump of a cresting wave slide past me, swam a few more strokes, then a wave crashed over me, burying me under dark water, forcing me down into the ocean floor. I pushed off the sand with my legs and surface, gasping and coughing, drawing in air before the next wave struck.

Again I was thrown down to the sand, hard, and the water dragged me along. I felt stone scraping my skin, felt the slicing of shells or glass, but I dug in with one hand and pulled myself towards shore, using the wave's forward motion to fight against the undertow.

More waves struck, each plunging me down to the ocean floor, but each bringing me closer to shore. Finally I was able to stand. I half staggered, half crawled up the slope, the water swirling around my thighs, my knees,

my shins, until, some time later, I realized I was far out of the sea, and the waves could no longer reach me.

I fell to my knees, sick and cold, the ache of exhaustion all through my body. Salt stung cut through me. I bled from several cuts and scrapes, and thin slices on my chest oozed a fine red.

After fifteen or twenty minutes my breath was almost normal and I pulled myself up to my feet, turned to face the ocean.

The fog was breaking up, and the chill was fading; the sun was rising, providing some warmth, but there was nothing to be seen on the water. The waves broke, and a few gulls flew past, screeching, but there was no dark object bobbing out on the swells. The dark object, and Jeanine, were gone.

I waited a long time, watching and searching, but nothing appeared, nothing washed up on shore. I felt fairly certain then that neither of their bodies would ever be found, and I was content with that. I finally turned and started up the gentle slope, headed towards the warmth of the house at the top of the cliff.





# HALLEY'S

(continued from page 43)

tered and shoved up into his right eye. Mr. Rachman took the case in both hands and swung it hard along the length of the businessman's body and caught him square beneath his chin in the midst of a choking scream so that the businessman's lower jaw was shattered, detached, and then embedded in the roof of his mouth. In the businessman's remaining eye was one second more of consciousness and then he was dead. Mr. Rachman turned over the businessman's corpse and took out his wallet, discovering that his name was Edward P. Maguire, and that he was from Sudbury, Massachusetts. He had one hundred and thirty-three dollars in cash, which Mr. Rachman put into his pocket. Mr. Rachman glanced through the credit cards, but took only the New England Bell telephone credit card. Mr. Maguire's briefcase, though battered and bloody, had remained locked, secured by an unknown combination. Mr. Rachman would have taken the time to break it open and examine its contents but the telephone on the bedside table rang. The hotel desk might not have noticed Mr. Maguire's entrance into the hotel, but Mr. Rachman did not want to take a chance that Mr. Maguire's failure to answer the telephone would lead to an investigation. Mr. Rachman went quickly through the dead man's pockets, spilling his change onto the bedspread. He found the key of a Hertz rental car with the tag number indicated on a plastic ring. Mr. Rachman pocketed it. He turned the dead man over once more and pried open his shattered mouth. A thick broth of clotting blood and broken teeth spilled out over the knot of Mr. Maguire's tie. With the tips of two fingers, Mr. Rachman picked out a pointed fragment of incisor, and put it into his mouth, licking the blood from his fingers as he did so. As he peered out into the hallway, Mr. Rachman rolled the broken tooth around the roof of his mouth, and then pressed it there with his tongue till its jagged edge drew blood and he could taste it. No one was in the hall, and Mr. Rachman walked out of Room 419, drawing it closed behind him. He took the elevator down to the basement garage,

and walked slowly about till he found Mr. Maguire's rented car. He drove out of the hotel garage and slowly circled several streets till he found a stationary store that was still open. Inside he bought a detailed street map of Mobile. He studied it by the interior roof light of the rented car. For two hours he drove through the outlying suburbs of the city, stopping now and then before a likely house, and noting its number on the map with a black felt-tip marker. At half-past eleven he returned to the Oasis Hotel and parked the rental car so that it would be visible from his window. He went up to his room, and noted in his diary,

*He spent the rest of the night reading through his black loose-leaf notebook, playing the part of the tireless investigator trying to discern a pattern.*

under 110185:

1910/Edward P Maguire/c  
43/Mobile Alabama/Hotel  
Palafax 419/1133/Jaw and  
Briefcase

On a separate page in the back of the looseleaf notebook, he added:

Edward P Maguire  
(110185)/9 Farmer's  
Road/Sudbury MA 01776/  
617 392 3690

That was just in case. Sometimes Mr. Rachman liked to visit widows. It added to the complexity of the pattern, and so far as Mr. Rachman was concerned, the one important thing was to maintain a pattern that couldn't be analyzed, that was arbitrary in every point. That was why he sometimes made use of the page of notations in the back of the book—because too much randomness was a pattern in itself. If he sometimes visited a widow after he had met her husband, he broke up the pattern of entirely unconnected deaths. Mr. Rachman, who was methodical to the very core of his being, spent a great

percentage of his waking time in devising methods to make each night's work seem entirely apart from the last's. Mr. Rachman, when he was young, had lived in a great city and had simply thought that its very size would hide him. But even in a great city, his very pattern of randomness had become apparent, and he had very nearly been uncovered. Mr. Rachman judged that he would have to do better, and he began to travel. In the time since then, he had merely refined his technique. He varied the length of his stays, he varied his acquaintance. That's what he called them, and it wasn't a euphemism—he simply had no other word for them, and really, they were the people he got to know best, if only for a short time. He varied his methods, he varied the time of the evening, and he even varied his variety. Sometimes he would arrange to meet three old women in a row, three old women who lived in similar circumstances in a small geographical area, and then he would move on, and his next acquaintance would be a young man who exchanged his favors for cash. Mr. Rachman imagined a perfect pursuer, and expended a great deal of energy in evading and tricking this imaginary hound. Increasingly, over the years Mr. Rachman's greatest satisfaction lay in evading this nonexistent, dogged detective. His only fear was that there was a pattern in the carpet he wove which was invisible to him, but perfectly apparent to anyone who looked at it from a certain angle.

No one took notice of Mr. Maguire's rented car that night. Next morning Mr. Rachman told the chambermaid he wasn't feeling well and would spend the day in bed, so she needn't make it up. But he let her clean the bathroom as she hadn't been able to do the day before. He lay with his arm over his eyes. "I hope you feel better," said the chambermaid. "Do you have any aspirin?"

"I've already taken some," said Mr. Rachman, "but thank you. I think I'll just try to sleep."

That night, Mr. Rachman got up and watched the rented car. It had two parking tickets on the windshield. At 11:30 p.m. he went downstairs, got into the car, and drove around three blocks slowly, just in case he was being followed. He was not, so far as he could tell. He opened his map of Mobile, and picked the house he'd marked that was nearest a crease. It was 117 Shadyglade Lane in a suburb called Spring Hill. Mr. Rachman

drove on, to the nearest of the other places he'd marked. He stopped in front of a house on Live Oak Street, about a mile away. No lights burned. He turned into the driveway and waited for fifteen minutes. He saw no movement in the house. He got out of his car, closing the door loudly, and walked around to the back door, not making any effort to be quiet.

There was no door bell so he pulled open the screen door and knocked loudly. He stood back and looked up at the back of the house. No lights came on that he could see. He knocked more loudly, then without waiting for a response he kicked at the base of the door, splintering it in its frame. He went into the kitchen, but did not turn on the light.

"Anybody home?" Mr. Rachman called out as he went from the kitchen into the dining room. He picked up a round glass bowl from the sideboard and hurled it at a picture. The bowl shattered noisily. No one came. Mr. Rachman looked in the other two rooms on the ground floor, then went upstairs, calling again, "It's Mr. Rachman!"

He went into the first bedroom, and saw that it belonged to a teen-aged boy. He closed the door. He went into another bedroom and saw that it belonged to the parents of the teen-aged boy. He went through the bureau drawers, but found no cash. The father's shirts, however, were in Mr. Rachman size—16½ x 33—and he took two that still bore the paper bands from the laundry. Mr. Rachman checked the other rooms of the second floor just in case, but the house was empty. Mr. Rachman went out the back door again, crossed the back yard of the house, and pressed through the dense ligustrum thicket there. He found himself in the back yard of a ranch house with a patio and a brick barbeque. Mr. Rachman walked to the patio and picked up a pot of geraniums and hurled it through the sliding glass doors of the den. Then he walked quickly inside the house, searching for a light switch. A man in pajamas suddenly lurched through a doorway, and he too was reaching for the light switch. Mr. Rachman put one hand on the man's shoulder, and with his other he grabbed the man's wrist. Then Mr. Rachman gave a twist, and smashed the back of the man's elbow against the edge of a television set with such force that all the bones there shattered at once. Mr. Rachman then took the man by the waist, lifted him up and carried him over to the

broken glass door. He turned him sideways and then pushed him against the long line of broken glass, only making sure that the shattered glass was embedded deep into his face and neck. When Mr. Rachman let the man go, he remained standing, so deep had the edge of broken door penetrated his head and chest. Just in case, Mr. Rachman pressed harder. Blood poured out over Mr. Rachman's hands. With a nod of satisfaction, Mr. Rachman released the man in pajamas and walked quickly back across the patio and disappeared into the shrubbery again. On the other side, he looked back, and could see the lights going on in



the house. He heard a woman scream. He took out a handkerchief to cover his bloody hands and picked up the shirts which he'd left on the back porch of the first house. Then he got into his car and drove around till he came to a shopping mall. He parked near half a dozen other cars—probably belonging to night watchmen—and took off his blood-stained jacket. He tossed it out the window. He took off his shirt, and wiped off the blood that covered his hands. He threw that out of the window, too. He put on a fresh shirt and drove back to the Oasis Hotel. He parked the car around the block, threw the keys into an alleyway, and went back up to his room. In his black looseleaf notebook he wrote, under 110285:

1205/unk./mc 35/Spring  
Hill (Mobile) Alabama/  
\$0/Broken glass

Mr. Rachman spent the rest of the night simply reading through his black loose-leaf notebook, not trying to remember what he could not easily bring to mind, but merely playing the part of the tireless investigator trying

to discern a pattern. Mr. Rachman did not think he was fooling himself when he decided that he could not.

When the chambermaid came the next day, Mr. Rachman sat on a chair with the telephone cradled between his ear and his shoulder, now and then saying, "Yes" or "No, not at all" or "Once more and let me check those numbers", as he made notations on a pad of paper headed up with a silhouette cartouche of palm trees.

Mr. Rachman checked out of the Oasis Hotel a few minutes after sundown, and smiled a polite smile when the young woman on the desk apologized for having to charge him for an extra day. The bill came to \$131.70 and Mr. Rachman paid in cash. As he watched the young woman on the desk tear up the credit card receipt, he remarked, "I don't like to get near my limit," and the young woman on the desk replied, "I won't even apply for one."

"But they sometimes come in handy, Marsha," said Mr. Rachman, employing her name aloud as a reminder to note it later in his diary. Nametags were a great help to Mr. Rachman in his travels, and he had been pleased to watch the rapid spread of their use. Before 1960 or thereabouts, hardly anyone had worn a nametag.

Mr. Rachman drove around downtown Mobile for an hour or so, just in case something turned up. Once, driving slowly down an alleyway that was scarcely wider than his car, a prostitute on yellow heels lurched at him out of a recessed doorway, plunging a painted hand through his rolled-down window. Mr. Rachman said, "Wrong sex," and drove on.

"Faggot!" the prostitute called after him.

Mr. Rachman didn't employ prostitutes except in emergencies, that is to say, when it was nearly dawn and he had not managed to make anyone's acquaintance for the night. Then he resorted to prostitutes, but not otherwise. Too easy to make that sort of thing a habit.

And habits were what Mr. Rachman had to avoid.

He drove to the airport, and took a ticket from a mechanized gate. He drove slowly around the parking lot, which was out of doors, and to one side of the airport buildings. He might have taken any of several spaces near the terminal, but Mr. Rachman drove slowly about the farther lanes. He could not drive very long, for fear of drawing the attention of a guard.

A blue Buick Skylark pulled into

# HALLEY'S

a space directly beneath a burning sodium lamp. Mr. Rachman made a sudden decision. He parked his car six vehicles down, and quickly climbed out with his blue Samsonite suitcase. He strode towards the terminal with purpose, coming abreast of the blue Buick Skylark. A woman, about thirty-five years old, was pulling a dark leather bag out of the backseat of the car. Mr. Rachman stopped suddenly, put down his case and patted the pockets of his trousers in alarm.

"My keys ..." he said aloud.

Then he checked the pockets of his suit jacket. He often used the forgotten keys ploy. It didn't really constitute a habit, for it was an action that would never appear later as evidence.

The woman with the suitcase came between her car and the recreational vehicle that was parked next to it. She had a handbag over her shoulder. Mr. Rachman suddenly wanted very badly to make this one work for him. For one thing, this was a woman, and he hadn't made the acquaintance of a female since he'd been in Mobile. That would disrupt the pattern a bit. She had a purse, which might contain money. He liked the shape and size of her luggage, too.

"Excuse me," she said politely, trying to squeeze by him. "I think I locked my keys in my car," said Mr. Rachman, moving aside for her.

She smiled a smile which suggested that she was sorry but that there was nothing she could do about it.

She had taken a single step towards the terminal when Mr. Rachman lifted his right leg and took a long stride forward. He caught the sole of his shoe against her right calf, and pushed her down to the pavement. The woman crashed to her knees on the pavement with such force that the bones of her knees shattered. She started to fall forward, but Mr. Rachman spryly caught one arm around her waist and placed his other hand on the back of her head. In his clutching fingers, he could feel the scream building in her mouth. He swiftly turned her head and smashed her face into the high-beam headlight of the blue Buick Skylark. He jerked

her head out again, and even before the broken glass had spilled down the front of her suit jacket, Mr. Rachman plunged her head into the low-beam headlight. He jerked her head out, and awkwardly straddling her body, he pushed her between her Buick and the next car in the lane, a silver VW GTI. He pushed her head hard down against the pavement four times, though he was sure she was dead already. He let go her head, and peered at his fingers in the light of the sodium lamp. He smelled the splotches of blood on his third finger and his palm and his thumb. He tasted the blood, and then wiped it off on the back of the wom-

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*He looked out  
the window.  
Halley's Comet  
was a small blur.  
He remembered the  
1910 visitation  
clearly. That  
time the comet  
had been quite  
spectacular.*

---

an's bare leg. Another car turned down the lane, and Mr. Rachman threw himself onto the pavement, reaching for the woman's suitcase before the automobile lights played over it. He pulled it into the darkness between the cars. The automobile drove past. Mr. Rachman pulled the woman's handbag off her shoulder, and then rolled her beneath her car. Fishing inside the purse for her car keys, he opened the driver's door and unlocked the back door. He climbed onto the car and pulled in her bag with him. He emptied its contents onto the floor, then crawled across the back seat and opened the opposite door. He retrieved his blue Samsonite suitcase from beneath the recreational vehicle where he'd kicked it as he struck up his acquaintance with the woman. The occupants of the car that had passed a few moments before walked in front of the Buick. Mr. Rachman ducked behind the back seat for a moment till he could no longer hear the voices—a man and a woman. He opened his Samsonite case and repacked all his belongings into the woman's black leather case. He reached

into the woman's bag and pulled out her wallet. He took her Alabama driver's license and a Carte Blanche credit card that read A. B. Frost rather than Aileen Frost. He put the ticket in his pocket. Mr. Rachman was mostly indifferent to the matter of fingerprints, but he had a superstition against carbon paper of any sort.

Mr. Rachman surreptitiously checked the terminal display and found that a plane was leaving for Birmingham, Alabama in twenty minutes. It would probably begin to board in five minutes. Mr. Rachman rushed to the Delta ticket counter, and said breathlessly, "Am I too late to get on the plane to Birmingham? I haven't bought my ticket yet."

Mark, the airline employee said, "You're in plenty of time—the plane's been delayed."

This was not pleasant news. Mr. Rachman was anxious to leave Mobile. Aileen Frost was hidden beneath her car, it was true, and might not be found for a day or so—but there was always a chance that someone would find her quickly. Mr. Rachman didn't want to be around for any part of the investigation. Also, he couldn't now say, "Well, I think I'll go to Atlanta instead." That would draw dangerous attention to himself. Perhaps he should just return to Mr. Maguire's car and drive away. The evening was still early. He could find a house in the country, make the acquaintance of anyone who lived there, sit out quietly the daylight hours, and leave early the following evening.

"How long a delay?" Mr. Rachman asked Mark.

"Fifteen minutes," said Mark pleasantly, already making out the ticket. "What name?"

Not Frost, of course. And Rachman was already several days old.

"Como," he said, not knowing why.

"Perry?" asked Mark with a laugh.

"Peter," said Mr. Como.

Mr. Como sighed. He was already half enamoured of his alternative plan. But he couldn't leave now. Mark might remember a man who had rushed in, then rushed out again because he couldn't brook a fifteen-minute delay. The ticket from Mobile to Birmingham was \$89, five dollars more than Mr. Como had predicted in his mind. Putting his ticket into the inside pocket of his jacket that did not contain Aileen Frost's ticket to Wilmington, Mr. Como went into the men's room and locked himself into a

stall. Under the noise of the flushing toilet, he quickly tore up Aileen Frost's ticket, and stuffed the fragments into his jacket pocket. When he left the stall he washed his hands at the sink until the only other man in the rest room left. Then he wrapped the fragments in a paper towel and stuffed that deep into the waste paper basket. Aileen Frost's license and credit card he slipped into a knitting bag of a woman waiting for a plane to Houston.

Mr. Como had been given a window seat near the front of the plane. The seat beside him was empty. After figuring his expenses for the day, Mr. Como wrote in his black loose-leaf notebook:

0745/Aileen Frost/fc  
35/Mobile Airport Parking  
Lot/5212/Car headlights

Mr. Como was angry with himself. Two airport killings within a week. That was laziness. Mr. Como had fallen into the lazy, despicable habit of working as early in the evening as possible. This, even though Mr. Como had never failed, not a single night, not even when only minutes had remained till dawn. But he tended to fret, and he didn't rest easy till he had got the evening's business out of the way. That was the problem of course. He had no other business. So if he worked early, he was left with a long stretch of hours till he could sleep with the dawn. If he put off till late, he only spent the long hours fretting, wondering if he'd be put to trouble. Trouble to Mr. Como meant witnesses (whose acquaintance he had to make as well), or falling back on easy marks—prostitutes, nightwatchmen, hotel workers. Or, worst of all, pursuit and flight, and then some sudden, uncomfortable place to wait out the daylight hours.

On every plane trip, Mr. Como made promises to himself: he'd use even more ingenuity, he'd rely on his expertise and work at late hours as well as early hours, he'd try to develop other interests. Yet he was at the extremity of his ingenuity, late hours fretted him beyond any pleasure he took in making a new acquaintance, and he had long since lost his interest in any pleasure but that moment he saw the blood of each night's new friend. And even that was only a febrile memory of what had once been a hot true necessity of desire.

Before the plane landed, Mr. Como invariably decided that he did too much thinking. For, finally, instinct had never failed him, though

everything else—Mr. Como, the world Mr. Como inhabited, and Mr. Como's tastes—everything else changed.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the captain's voice, "we have a special treat for you tonight. If you'll look out the left side of the plane, and up—towards the Pleiades—you'll see Halley's Comet. You'll see it better from up here than from down below. And I'd advise you to look now, because it won't be back in our lifetimes."

Mr. Como looked out of the window. Most of the other passengers didn't know which stars were the Pleiades, but Mr. Como did. Halley's Comet was a small blur to the right of the small constellation. Mr. Como gladly gave his seat to a young couple who wanted to see the comet. Mr. Como remembered the 1910 visitation quite clearly, and that time the comet had been spectacular. He'd been living in Canada, he thought, somewhere near Halifax. It was high in the sky

then, brighter than Venus, with a real tail, and no one had to point it out to you. He tried to remember the time before—1834, he determined with a calculation of his fingernail on the glossy cover of the Delta In-flight magazine. But 1834 was beyond his power of recollection. The Comet was surely even brighter then, but where had he been at that time? Before airports, and hotels, and credit cards, and the convenience of nametags. He'd lived in one place then for long periods of time, and hadn't even kept proper records. There'd been a lust then, too, for the blood, and every night he'd done more than merely place an incriminated finger to his lips.

But everything had changed, evolved slowly and immeasurably, and he was not what once he'd been. Mr. Como knew he'd change again. The brightness of comets deteriorated with every pass. Perhaps on its next journey around the sun, Mr. Como wouldn't be able to see it at all. ■



# RAIN

(continued from page 47)

here."

"I know," Delia said uncomfortably. "What else does it say?"

"Not much. Speculation that he was a runaway, anyone with information should call the police. Do you see why I don't want you staring out the window at the goings-on down there on the street?"

She smeared her sleep-mussed hair away from her face without answering.

"I'm not kidding. You could see something and someone could see you seeing it and decide to make sure you didn't say anything about it."

"Maybe I should call the police," she said, staring through the doorway at the living room.

"What? Why?"

"Because I saw them. The boys in the rain last night."

"So what would you tell them? That you saw some boys hanging out in the rain last night?"

"Well . . . yes."

"Bad idea, Delia. Just telling them there was a group of boys on the street last night isn't providing them with any information on the dead kid who may not have been with them in the first place."

"I have a feeling he was. The paper said he was found about a block away from here—"

"That doesn't mean shit, Deals. Stay away from that window from now on."

She got up and stomped over to the coffeepot to refill her cup. "Why don't you put a bag over my head? That way I couldn't see anything. Or better yet, sew my eyes shut or poke them out altogether."

"I'm trying to help you, to see that you protect yourself."

"You're not my father," she said, pouring a dollop of milk into her coffee. The spoon rang on the porcelain as she stirred it. "You're not even my husband."

"Not legally, perhaps, but in every other sense I am."

She bit her lower lip so she wouldn't ask him which of the two relationships she had mentioned he was referring to.

"If you'd just stop and think for two seconds, you'd see I'm right."

"Look, Joe, I'm not going to keep away from the window just because I might see something."

"I didn't say that." Joe rapped the table with his knuckles. "Now you're twisting what I said because you don't want to hear it."

"You know how I feel about anyone telling me what to do."

"I'm not trying to boss you around. I'm trying to show you that you've been doing something foolish."

She adjusted her bathrobe, pulling the belt tighter. "I really didn't want to fight with you today."

Joe spread his hands. "Then don't."

"All right, I won't." She gulped

*The wet street  
gleamed. She  
could hear the  
patter of rain on  
the pavement like  
a monotonous yet  
urgent drum roll.  
It seemed to  
agitate the boys,  
to stir them up.*

down half her coffee and dashed the rest in the sink. "I'm going to take a shower."

The memory of the daydream or waking dream of whatever it had been from the night before tagged after her as she moved languidly through the day. She had visualized one of the boys disappearing from the group. Had he reappeared a block away, face up on the pavement, dead? She had not visualized that. But then, the boy had disappeared on his own in the dream, not because she'd willed it.

She and Joe made a half-hearted peace in which the subject of her window vigils was dropped unresolved. Conversation between them dried up. When Joe suggested a matinee, she agreed to it neutrally as an opportunity for them to get away from each other while being together. They sat side by side in the dark theater, reprieved from their relationship for two hours and when they emerged, blinking, into the fading day, the sun had vanished behind low-hanging, gray clouds.

"It'll rain like a bastard tonight," someone walking out behind them said. "It's just not going to let up."

Joe squeezed her hand as they walked to the car. By dark, it was pouring.

On the couch, Joe snored softly, his ever-present book fallen open face down on his chest. Delia watched him sleep, knowing that when he woke up, he would be annoyed with her for not rousing him. Too bad.

She wasn't actually angry with him any more. He couldn't understand her all the time any more than she could wake him up every time he dozed off before bedtime. They'd been together for almost three years, unmarried because of the tax penalty of the legal state of wedlock, which they'd both agreed was ridiculous and unfair. Almost three years. Had their relationship been a person, it would be well into the toddler stage, still developing, very troublesome. She wondered if a relationship could be reduced to those terms. Sometimes it did feel as though they had some sort of young, unwieldy creature between them that they were struggling to tame or something. Or maybe she was just wondering whether to have a baby, as she did every so often.

Joe twitched in his sleep. The sheer familiarity of him was suddenly huge in her mind, like a balloon that had abruptly inflated in a small enclosed area. She backed away a step. Thunder rumbled mutedly, gently, it seemed to her, almost as if to remind her that it was still raining. She had been conscientiously staying away from the windows tonight, not so much as an outward sign to Joe that she was heeding his advice but on the pretense of disinterest. Now with Joe asleep on the sofa in all his concentrated familiarity, she went to the alcove and pulled back the filmy curtain.

They were there, as always; loitering, shifting, waiting. The wet street gleamed. She could hear the patter of the rain on the pavement, at first faint and steady, then gradually increasing in volume and tempo, like a monotonous yet urgent drum roll. It seemed to agitate the boys, to stir them up somehow. She still couldn't tell exactly how many there were but she knew there was one less than there had been. She was sure of it.

She caught the movement in the shadows of a boy leaping from the bus stop bench into the midst of the others, who were milling around closer to the curb. In another moment, she thought, they would look up at the window, at her. She pushed herself away, ducking behind the wall.

Let them look now. All they would see was an empty, lighted window. Maybe it would remind them they could be somewhere else than out in the cold and damp.

Joe mumbled something in his sleep. She fled to the kitchen and ran the water.

At the last moment, she decided to call in sick to work the next morning. She sat on the edge of the bed with one shoe on and the other in her lap, watching Joe dress. He disapproved of that sort of thing, calling in sick when you weren't on your deathbed, but he didn't say anything to her about it. He only finished dressing and went into the kitchen for a quick cup of coffee. Perhaps he was willing to allow her the need of a mental health day now and then. She listened to the sounds he made, the gurgle of the coffee as he poured, the tap of the cup when he set it down between gulps. The newspaper rustled as he leafed through it and then pushed it aside. After work, he would give it a thorough reading.

What must it be like to be Joe, she wondered suddenly—to be so busy with the world, her included? His life was utterly directed; he was like a motorboat, cutting deliberately through the water to some firm destination, while she was more like a waterskiier that had latched on behind at the dock, moving in wide arcs behind him as he towed her along.

Jesus, how had she gotten so ... undirected, unmotivated—just plain un?

"What happened to me?" she said aloud. Her voice died in the still air of the empty apartment. Joe had left for work without her even hearing the door shut. She looked down at the shoe in her lap. One moment she'd been listening to every trivial sound he was making, the next she'd faded out completely, as though she'd been the one who'd left instead of Joe.

She tossed the shoe away, kicked off the other one and changed out of her acceptable product-management dress-for-success suit into her oldest jeans and sweatshirt. All right, what did she do next, call in a SWAT team from NOW? Hello, *Women's Movement*? This is Delia LeBlanc and somehow I have become unstuck from modern living. I have dropped out from everything we've worked to achieve, I am visibly invisible. Unvisible. I need to have my consciousness raised from the dead.

No. This was beyond the matter

of gender, her consciousness was beyond dead, it was *undead*. To be or *unbe*, that was the question and she *unwas*. She had become a cypher. A zombie. *Urban Zombie!! No Thrills, No Chills, No Nothing!! DON'T Go To See It At A Theatre Near You Because It WON'T Be Playing There!! Or Anywhere Else!!*

[How un was she, Rodney?]

[Oh, man, she was so un that she watched TV all day without turning the set on. We're talking major un here.]

[What's so funny, folks? Are you under the mistaken impression that I'm the only one? Do you really think that



people don't slip through the chinks into limbo on a regular basis? Have you never said: *What ever became of So-and-So, you know who I mean, the name escapes me and I only vaguely remember the face ...*]

What was the number of the Existential Crisis Line?

"They'd just put me on hold," she said aloud and covered her mouth with her hand. Even that wasn't funny.

She looked at her watch. Five minutes since Joe had left the house. Her life was slipping away an eighth of a teaspoon at a time.

Sun and clouds fought for the day and the sun conceded just after noon. Delia lay on the couch, pinned to the cushions by a combination of inertia and aching sinuses, a carefully-made sandwich of cheese, lettuce, and tomato on seven-grain lying untouched on a plate on the floor. She had unread several current magazines and unstared a book Joe had finished last week and recommended to her.

She wouldn't even fade out, she thought tiredly. She'd simply become more and more inert until she de-

volved into a speed-bump on the highway of life. Joe's life. She had an *unlife*.

She would call him. Right now. She'd get up and call him and tell him she needed help. He'd come home and together they'd figure out what to do. Professional help, maybe, or something just as simple as signing up for a course in something unusual at the university. Or dinner out and a movie ... and then come home and continue to dissolve slowly, like out-of-date Alka Seltzer in standing water.

*Whatever became of ...?*

Delia? Oh, her shelf-life expired. such an *unshame*.

She closed her eyes and pretended to sleep. Sometime later, she pretended to visualize the view from the window overlooking the bus stop. The boys capered in the wet and the dark, one less than they had been (however many there were), and she knew they were aware she was watching, they'd been aware all along and they'd been holding her, their aimless movements actually an arcane little rindance meant to mesmerize as it wove a pattern that worked only on someone who had receded far enough, so far that ...

Joe shook her arm once and then twice, so she pretended to wake up.

"It's the weather," Joe said. "They say it's a cycle of tropical storms affecting the northern latitudes, happens every few years. Everyone's walking around with their eyes glazed and their mouths hanging open. But it ought to break soon. When it does, you'll feel like a new person. Trust me."

She did trust him, Delia thought. Her *unlife* was completely in his hands, or had been until it had started slipping through his fingers. What would happen when he discovered she was a failed human being? Or, rather, what would *unhappen*? She got up from the easy chair and went to the window, peering through the dribbles of rain.

"All right," Joe said after a long pause. "Have it your way. Don't do anything, don't be anything. I saw you had that book out. You didn't read it, though, did you?"

"No," she said in small voice. The boys were slowly keeping their backs to her; she could tell by the way their silhouettes bent and dipped against the faint shine of the wet pavement.

"All right," he said again. "There's nothing I can do for you and I've tried. You're not a baby, Deals. No one can pull you out of this until you

# RAIN

reach out. I've thrown you a rope several times but you've refused to grab onto it."

The boys made a momentary tableau around the bench, like a dance troupe pausing at a rest in the music. Lightning strobed silently; their faces were turned upward to the window now and she caught a glimpse of the rain beaded on their colorless cheeks.

"It's not refusal, Joe. It's paralysis."

He didn't answer. It took her a long time to turn around see that he had, absurdly, fallen asleep, his ever-present book tented over his crotch.

Delia pressed her hands against her mouth. Locked out. She couldn't get back in now if she tried with all her strength. The rain made white noise against the windows, on the street.

No.

She straightened up, throwing off the afghan she'd wrapped around her shoulders. No, she would not accept that, she would not fade meekly away into the state of *un*. She would fight her way back in if meant she had to die in the attempt. But she would die real.

Yo, melodrama!

*That's right, you wanna make something of it?*

She went to the closet by the front door and yanked out the first coat she touched, an old Army surplus jacket of Joe's that they'd been hanging onto for no reason except inertia. Well, the age of inertia was over, she thought as she thrust herself into it. She'd use it and anything else, she'd use everything usable and anything unusable would go out in the trash.

She paused in the half-open door and looked back at Joe. His breathing was heavy but soft, not quite a snore. Then she stomped out.

Afire with resolve, she marched down seven flights of stairs rather than waiting for the elevator, strode through the empty lobby and pushed stiff-armed out the security door.

The rain, in ultimate anti-climax, had stopped.

She stood staring at the deserted bus stop, catching her breath. They only came out in the rain; they were gone now.

And just what had she thought she was going to accomplish anyway? Confront them and do what? Order them off her turf and forbid them ever to return to steal her soul? They were just a bunch of boys in the goddamn rain and she was a crazy person with symptoms straight out of the paranoia textbook: Yes, doctor, boys in the rain have been stealing my soul and not only that, aliens have been giving me sinus headaches and the Pentagon has been using an invisible ray that's disrupted my sex life, too.

Which was worse—thinking you were going *un* or knowing you were going crazy?

*The boys capered in the wet and dark. She knew they were aware she was watching, their aimless movements an arcane little rainedance meant to mesmerize.*

The hair on the back of her neck, she thought, might have been standing up. Yes, it very well might have.

Now, attend, class. We shall take our first steps out of the locked ward by walking to the bus stop right over there and proving to ourselves that it is only a bus stop where nothing ever happens except that perfectly ordinary people wait for a bus, sometimes in the rain, and it is not significant in any way to anyone, least of all us. The only *un* we are going to experience is that of going uncrazy.

She reached around the corner, hesitated, and forced herself to step off the curb and cross the street, watching the bench and the bus stop sign grow larger as she approached. Behind her, she could almost feel the lighted rectangle of the living room window seven stories up. Trained on her like a gunsight, the dividers between the panes acting as the crosshairs. Except now there was no one to look through it.

She crossed the street forever and reached the other side with her heart laboring in her chest.

The bench was empty, the narrow

wooden slats wet and cold. Sit down on it and you'd be soaked through. She touched the back, holding the jacket closed with her other hand. Just a bench, standard city issue for bus stops, nothing out of the ordinary.

But the bench had never been in dispute, had it?

She was in the act of turning around to go back when the rain suddenly started again, falling straight down.

And they were there, all around her as if they'd been there the whole time.

The rain beat on the pavement but it seemed to be caressing her, accommodating her form, sliding through her hair, along her skin and down into her clothes, smoothing as it went until it collected in low center and then rolled on, down her legs.

Their faces were visible and yet no clearer. Anonymous; unfaces.

But even an unface could fade even further away, if there was another ready to displace it. Face up on the pavement with puddles in the eyes, no identification, no outward signs of foul play. And what happened after that? Nothing much. Nothing at all.

They stood with her as the rain did its work. After a while, it simply ran along the new, bony smoothness of her chest, a few drops rolling awkwardly from the freshly-formed Adam's apple, down adolescent stomach and narrow hips into unused, unalike masculinity.

Fingers touching face; always on the brink of bearding but never coming to pass. The jacket fit no better but somehow it hung differently from the shoulders, as though someday it might. But it never would.

And even now, their number still seemed indefinite. Might have been seven, though. Very well might have been.

There is no reason for this. Random activity; elements bumping together achieve a formation and a thing will happen. It draws; it has a force. But there is no reason, no reason for this at all. The spring rains come and after awhile, they go.

Waking to native country.

In formation, a look up at the lighted window.

Him? Not a chance. When Joe awoke, he would be living alone.

The rain fading. Dematerializing. It's all right; there are others. Not many, and easy to find.

The rain stopped and the boys were gone.

# BOOKS

(continued from page 13)

son who have also served their time excavating in these trenches.

Berkley's press release accompanying Michael Reaves and Steve Perry's *Dome* (Berkley, 274 pp., ISBN 0-425-09560-6, \$3.50) says the two authors "have been recognized as today's most important collaborators in science fiction writing." This may trigger a pained reaction from Messrs. Niven and Pournelle. Perry and Reaves can't be blamed; they just wrote the book. *Dome* is a credible and creditable novel of undersea life after a viral global holocaust. It probably won't knock your socks off, but it's solid. Good professional work.

I suppose I cannot ethically spend many words discussing *Wild Cards II: Aces High*, edited by George R.R. Martin (Bantam Spectra 416 pp., ISBN 0-553-26464-7, \$3.95). Though I am not a contributor to this volume, I am in both the first and third volumes and probably could be considered to have a vested interest. But I certainly owe it to George and the other contributors to say something. The premise of this new shared-world/anthology/mosaic novel project is that 1946 saw America afflicted with an alien virus that imparted super-powers to a small number of survivors. The epicenter of the contamination was New York City. *Aces High* takes place in a contemporary Manhattan setting where, while most of the population goes on about its normal business, a small percentage of heroes and villains have super-normal abilities. The core of the saga's current volume is an extraterrestrial invasion born out of unholy wedlock between, I'd submit, *The Mist* and *Buckaroo Banzai*.

Some of the collaborators in *Aces High* include Roger Zelazny, Lewis Shiner, Pat Cadigan, Melinda Snodgrass, Walter Jon Williams, Victor Milan, and editor Martin. Two accomplished newcomers in the series are John J. Miller and Walton Simons. The tone of the *Wild Cards* books is intended to be a sort of high-quality comic adventure, amiable but not camp. I discovered with *Aces High* that reading the books is almost as enjoyable as writing them. Almost.

I'm not just a reviewer—I'm also an sf writer, true? So I'm going to try my hand at prophecy. The Philip K. Dick Award will be coming up soon. The PKD is awarded annually to the best original paperback published in America. The winner can be a novel, collection, or anthology. The finalists haven't been announced as I write this. The winners will be acknowledged about the time this column sees print. So I'm going to go out on a limb. Here's what I'm forecasting the final ballot to be: *A Hidden Place* by Robert Charles Wilson (Bantam), *Santiago* by Mike Resnick (Tor), *The Hercules Text* by Jack McDevitt (Ace), *Eclipse* by John Shirley (Bluejay), *Enigma* by Michael Kube-McDowell (Ace), and *Wrack & Roll* by Bradley Denton (Questar). Two worthy volumes that should, but probably won't be on the ballot are *Artificial Things* by Karen Joy Fowler (Bantam) and *Afterlives* edited by Pamela Sargent and Ian Watson (Penguin). Although eligible, there seems generally a bias against story collections in the judging process. Also, both books have a small percentage of reprint material along with the preponderance of original text.

Though my personal favorite is *Wrack & Roll*, the arrangement of sheep's entrails on my dining room floor says that *A Hidden Place* will win. (I'd tell you about my Super Bowl predictions, but let's not get ridiculous...)

Now I'm going to close by being a truly presumptuous seer and telling you what you're going to be reading a year from now. Every once in a while, I get to read someone's book when it's fresh out of the typewriter (or printer). I've just finished the manuscript of Dan Simmons's second novel, *Carrión Comfort*, all 1,372 pages of it. That's not a misprint. Based on the author's novella of the same name, published in *Omni*, the book is somewhere between the length of *IT* and *Mirror of Her Dreams*. But get this. None of it is padding. This incredible novel of power and rape, mind-vampirism and moral evolution, intrigue and controversy, is nearly fourteen-hundred pages of lean, muscular prose. It is absolutely astonishing. Unfailingly plotted and exquisitely written, Simmons (winner of last year's World Fantasy Award for *Song of Kali*) has created a tour de force. *Carrión Comfort* is a Bluejay legacy which Tor has undertaken to publish.

Start setting aside your idle evenings in 1988.

# BARKER

(continued from page 27)

next have you got up your sleeve? And that's not just because I want to have more books, but because I want to surprise myself. And surprising myself is a daily challenge. I was doing that before I had any success or money, and I am doing it still and hope to continue to do it.

The money and success and so on are byproducts of something which obsesses me. That thing—the creation of fictions—continues to obsess me, so that those byproducts remain simply byproducts. I think they please my parents more than they please me. My mother keeps the catalog of my reviews and interviews, whereas I just think onward and upward—another story another book, another movie. And if I stopped once and thought too hard about it—and this may be another reason why I don't—maybe I'd fear that I wouldn't have the trick of it any longer.

So I carry on, and not for a day has it ceased to be a pleasure. And it's even more of a pleasure now because so many people are reading the stuff, and I'm getting their feedback. Having people writing letters to me is just wonderful. Writing the stories is a power trip—and the trip is that you're actually possessing people for a little bit. People that you don't even know. You're actually putting this page in front of them and saying, "Right, I'm going to get hold of you and not let go. And you don't know me, but when you're done, you're going to know some very intimate part of me." And that power trip is infinitely more important to me than the money or the fame or whatever else—the fact that I am getting into the heads of people, just like other people have gotten into my head and affected me.

This may sound mystical, but it's not. When I was twelve, for instance, I read Ray Bradbury and I read *Moby Dick*. They marked me very deeply, and part of me belonged—and still belongs—to Bradbury and Melville. And I would like to think that there are a lot of people out there now who have little parts of themselves that belong to me.

I like that feeling. It keeps me sleeping peacefully at night.



# SCREEN

(continued from page 16)

one ...

## A Blooming Wonder

Roger Corman's reputation largely rests on his ability to do a lot with very little, and I expect he must be fairly accustomed to such successes, but I imagine even he must be astounded at the continued flourishing growth from the seed he planted when he put together his tiny economy comedy/horror movie *Little Shop of Horrors* for three thousand dollars in eight and a half hours (only kidding) way back when cars had tail fins and Elvis was thin and purty.

The film itself did right well at the skid row emporiums and drive-ins, then became a cult classic (sort of like becoming a vampire: you show up mostly at night and are endowed with a weird kind of immortality), then became a highly successful off-B'way musical (or possibly off-off-B'way, I'm not quite sure of the technical rating as it's taking place in the East Village) (still), and is now once again a successful moving picture, only this time it's playing at respectable theaters which are attended by a much more high-class type audience (for example, when I covered the showing of the new *Shop* nobody started having problems with the DTs, as one chap did during my viewing of the first version in a Chicago roach palace), and the really nice thing about it all is that its essential nastiness and meanness of spirit has survived pretty much intact along with its total disrespect, if not actual loathing, for the American way of life along with most everything else on the planet Earth, including visiting extraterrestrials.

The simple, homely plot of all three versions is that a disgusting nebbish working in a repulsive florist shop forms an alliance with a loathsome flesh-eating plant, feeding it first with his own blood and then with various people the nebbish deems unworthy in order that the plant will grow ever larger and more grotesque and inspire a morbid curiosity on the part of the public which will bring fame and money to the shop, make the 'nebbish look good, and cause a pathetic tart he has long worshipped from afar to fall in love with him.



AUDREY ROSE: *Little Shop* puts ground glass in the marzipan.

Along the way everybody the nebbish encounters is, in one way or another, totally disgusting, and I think it's entirely fair to say there is no redeeming moral value in *Shops I, II or III*, except, possibly, for a little mawkish sentimentality, and my feeling is that if a film/off-B'way musical as evil as that can have such continued success then there is hope for the human race no matter what the cynics may say.

Myself I admit I prefer the stage version of *Shop* (although I must confess I am prejudiced as when I covered the thing for National Public Radio I was allowed to be eaten alive by the plant!) as Frank Oz's version of it maybe misses a lot of the vicious point of *Shop's* joke by making his movie occasionally truly dark and somber at various points and thus giving away the fact that he's shocked, deep down, by its merciless cynicism. To be true to the spirit of *Little Shop of Horrors* one should be unremittingly jolly throughout and totally unput off by, indeed scrupulously amused by, the poverty, despair, utter failure, and various other miseries which human (and alien) flesh are heir to and which are examined by this caustic little classic.

The cast is very good, particularly

Ellen Greene as the tart (she played the role when the play opened and owns it forever) whose battered heart yearns for Tupperware, Steve Martin as a mean, mean *mean* dentist (and I mean MEAN) with Bill Murray as his ever-lovin' masochist, John Candy doing an inspired bit as an insane radio interviewer of insane people, and Michelle Weeks, Tichina Arnold, and Tisha Campbell who do a fantastic greek chorus number throughout as the sinister musical group. Pray God they don't show up in *your* life.

And if that doesn't convince you to go see it, let me tout the huge British-built set of an American skid row on which the whole thing is played. It's lovingly done and you'll enjoy it very much in spite of its erring in having an obviously European style neon sign too much in evidence; I think I liked its scummy puddles best of all. Then, of course, there are the unrelentingly cruel and witty lyrics and music by Howard Ashman and Alan Menken which combine a sort of eternal despair of life with a fiendishly accurate ear for the foolish, silly sweetness of the music of that odd time.

So life is not all, thank heavens, peaches and cream. ■

PHOTO © THE GEFEN FILM CORP.

# MUSIC

by Christopher  
Karwowski

## Sounds for a New Age

It's lunchtime. You're face to face with your chicken salad sandwich, your boss has just laid down a new pile of work which resembles Mount Vesuvius, and the stress begins to build to vein-popping potential. Before you start, you reach for a tape, place it in the player and close your eyes. Your office becomes a field of wildflowers. Later, walking through midtown, Walkman strapped firmly to your ears, the hordes of businessmen clad in pin-stripes begin to look like oversized penguins. In the midst of traffic the lampposts seem to sway like willows.

But it's not that you've lost touch with reality—you've been listening to New Age music.

Although New Age has been around since the early sixties, it is only now coming into a mainstream marketplace, through the efforts of such specialty labels as Windham Hill and Narada. It is hard to trace its origins exactly, since it is made up of so many diverse elements—fusion jazz, tribal beats, ska, Indian raga, Western rock, mantras, nature. Thanks to the immense success of the relatively few New Age superstars such as Kitaro, Vangelis, and George Winston, the work of lesser-known artists is having some success.

The influences of ethnic, tribal, and spiritual music are evident in many of the more popular works. The result is an extremely diverse group of musicians producing unusual music. Any two New Age cassettes may sound nothing at all alike.

Many New Age artists received their training in either jazz or classical and decided to move on. Others pursued music as an outgrowth of their spirituality. In fact, the name New Age is borrowed from the trendier side of the



human potential movement, and the music was popularized by its adherents.

Although the sound (also called Space Music) has been around for more than twenty years, it is only fairly recently that its audience has broadened and become numerous. Douglas Hardy, general manager and music director of Star Magic novelty shop in Manhattan, accounts for the popularity of the music: "People may listen to some New Age record and think 'Hey, I've heard that before.' And they have. New Age is being used in radio spots, television shows, commercials, films

like *Country*, *Blade Runner*, *Gallipoli*, and *Chariots of Fire*." And the audience is getting bigger. With NPR's syndicated *Music From the Hearts of Space* people are getting interested. Carrington Thompson of Tower Records in New York calls it a grass-roots movement. "People hear it on the radio and then come here to find it."

However, New Age music isn't crowding Madonna and The Talking Heads off the top forty yet. Tower Records installed its New Age bin in 1985, and only recently expanded the selection into three distinct sections



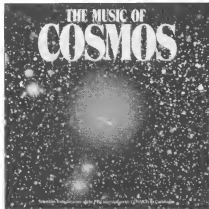
(New Age, New Music, and Electronic). It's still no picnic trying to find Shadowfax's latest in your suburban Sam Goody.

Much of the current success of New Age music is due to the popularity of the Windham Hill label. Founded in 1976 by guitarist William Ackerman, Windham Hill has now become known as the source for New Age music, in part because of a distribution arrangement with A&M Records. With such artists as George Winston and Shadowfax signed with them, they command a sizeable portion of the New Age sales and constitute a big influence on the field. With mostly acoustic instruments, Windham Hill's music sounds more American folk than anything else. George Winston's *December* is a good example.

While it's impossible to pigeonhole New Age music, some sub-categories do exist. But while an artist may appear under one heading, he has more than likely produced music that would fit into other categories.

"Space" or "Celestial" music may be what most people imagine when they think of New Age. The sensation of floating about in outer or inner space is created by a highly structured synthesis of computer-generated sounds and more conventional instruments. Kitaro, Don Robertson, and Brian Eno are all well known within the field. Kitaro, one of the popular Space Music artists, is best known for his *Silk Road*, which was produced for a Japanese television series of the same name. The feeling of the music is not only free and "spacy" but also sweeping and epic. Because of the instruments he uses, Kitaro's music has an especially oriental atmosphere.

Stephen Halpern's work may be the best example of New Age "Relaxation Music." Relaxation Music aims to give the listener inner tranquility and harmony, or just provide a nice aural landscape as background. Halpern's

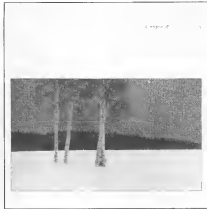


"The Anti-Frantic Alternative" series illustrates the music's purpose very well. Titles in the series include *Soft Focus*, and *The Comfort Zone*. The music relies heavily on acoustic instruments and a very pronounced piano influence. Other artists in this field include Andreas Vollenweider, especially his albums entitled *White Winds* and *Caverna Magica*. Although Vollenweider's music is a bit more upbeat than Halpern's, it does provide an atmosphere to think and to chill out in.

While the term "High Energy" may seem to contradict what New Age stands for, there are several artists within the field whose music makes you want to get up and move. Two of the most popular are Jean Michael Jarre (son of French composer Maurice Jarre) and the members of Tangerine Dream. Jarre debuted in 1976 with *Oxygene*, one of the classics of the movement. To date, *Oxygene* has sold over two million copies world-wide. It's a must in any New Age collection. Jarre works with electronic instruments to create an uplifting, futuristic atmosphere. Two of the best Jarre titles are *Les Concerts en Chine* and *Les Chants Magnétiques*.

Tangerine Dream has been at the forefront of New Age since their inception in Berlin in the early seventies. Twenty-four albums later, they still produce music which makes you want to walk forever, or at least to get up and vacuum your apartment. Fine examples of Tangerine Dream's work include *Le Parc*, *Poland*, *White Eagle*, and the soundtrack for *Blade Runner*. The New York-based Private Music label, founded in 1985 by Peter Baumann (formerly of Tangerine Dream) offers many upbeat New Age titles, such as Lucia Hwong's *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, Patrick O'Hearn's *Ancient Dreams*, and Eddie Jobson's *Theme of Secrets*.

"World Fusion" is a term used to describe New Age music which crosses cultural bounds by employing the mu-



sic of different cultures to create sound. Two outstanding talents in the field are Deuter and the group Shadowfax. Deuter, a German musician, combines many Eastern and Western instruments such as the synthesizer, zither, tambora, and the sitar to create a truly international sound. Two of his best works are *Cicada* and *Nirvana Road*. Shadowfax started as a heavy-metal band, but more recently began exploring the World Music genre. *The Dreams of Children* best exemplifies their cross-cultural sound.

One artist who defies any attempt at categorization is Vangelis. He is perhaps best known for his soundtracks to TV commercials, or the music which accompanied the movie *Chariots of Fire* and the series *Cosmos*. His music varies from the haunting, as in his album *Heaven and Hell*, to the epic and grand as in the 1980 release, *Antarctica*. His mixture of synthesized sounds and delicate percussion produce a powerful music which evokes many emotions.

If you can't seem to find these recordings, two excellent places to start are either at a nearby college record or book store or by contacting SILO, Inc. (at Box 429, S. Main St., Waterbury, Vermont, 05676; (802) 244- 5178), a distributor handling an immense selection of New Age, as well as classical and jazz. New Age albums may also be found in such places as bookstores, health food stores, and camping equipment stores.

It's worth the effort. In contrast to today's preprocessed pop, New Age music not only offers a unique sound, but also an unequivocal calm and a truly heartfelt sense of spirituality. Whereas rock and easy-listening music mask the environment, deadening the senses, New Age opens up spaces, sensitizes us to sounds already present, and orchestrates them. As Brian Eno puts it: "It's intended to induce calm and a space to think."

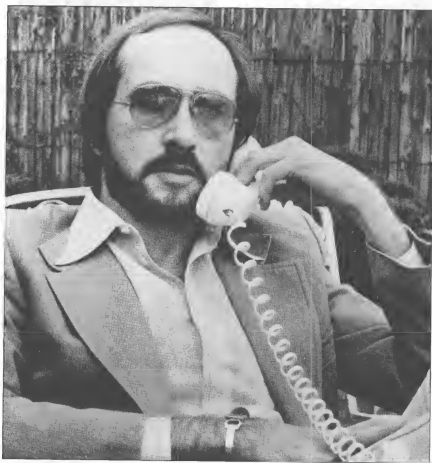
# TELEVISION

by Robin Bromley

## *Lord of the Darkside: A conversation with Laurel Entertainment's Executive Producer Richard Rubinstein.*

For a man who is on his way to building one of the hottest new companies in fantasy film and television, producer Richard Rubinstein is surprisingly low key. Dressed in sneakers and jeans, he looks more like an L.L. Bean model than the producer who marshalled the funds for the most successful phase of filmmaker George Romero's career. And his office, on the tenth floor of a building wedged among the furniture and a antique showrooms crowding New York's Broadway and 22nd Street, is free of Hollywood glitz. The *Creepshow*, *Day*—and *Dawn*—of the *Dead* posters are all out in the hall. But as Rubinstein talks about how he and Romero turned their fledgling television company Laurel Entertainment into a base for Romero's movies and *Tales from the Darkside* and his plans to support a whole new crop of directors, it soon becomes clear that he's a man who knows where he's going. Like the famous Flatiron Building that stands only a block from his office, Rubinstein is cutting a new path into the thick of things.

Rubinstein didn't exactly plan a career in film or fantasy, however. In fact, he takes ironic delight in never having been a fan. "Curiously enough," he says, "I spent a lot of time as a child sitting on the knee of Jack Kane, one of the original EC artists. He was one of my dad's best friends. But as I was growing up, I had no appreciation *whatsoever* for the genre. It wasn't until I met George Romero that I began to assimilate that perspective."



**ROMERO'S CAESAR:** Laurel's Rubinstein calls the shots.

That happened in 1973, when Rubinstein went to interview *Night of the Living Dead's* director for *Filmmaker's Newsletter*. The timing was perfect. Burned by the box office failures of *There's Always Vanilla* in 1971 and *Jack's Wife* in 1972, Romero was looking for a way to finance his next film without giving in to Hollywood. Rubinstein, an M.B.A. from Columbia who dabbled in photography, was looking for a way to combine his interest in the arts and his degree. As Rubinstein remembers it, "That first conversation, I would say, went easily. George was eighty percent creative and twenty percent business. And I was the reverse of that. I was eighty per-

cent business and twenty percent creative. And that made a good match."

At first the new partners went slowly. "Most people don't know this," Rubinstein explains, "but we started off making sports specials for television. From 1973 to 1976, we made a series of one-hour biographies, the first of which was on O. J. Simpson when he broke Jim Brown's all-time rushing record. And we had a rather interesting three years behind the scenes of professional sports with Reggie Jackson, the Pittsburgh Steelers, and Franco Harris. What it did for us was it gave us a base as a film company. George's first love, of course, was

always feature films. I just felt that the opportunity to do television gave us some bread and butter."

That "bread and butter" enabled Romero to film *Martin* in 1977, proving to the critics that the dark expertise he'd displayed in *Night* was not just beginner's luck. But it was their next film, *Dawn of the Dead*, co-produced in Italy, that won Romero international acclaim and Rubinstein the financial footing he was after. "After *Dawn*," Rubinstein explains, "we were able to garner public financing. So now, anyone who wants a piece of us can call their broker. We found that that was a way to raise capital and control what we're doing."

In case anyone is tempted to underestimate how important those last two ingredients are to a company like Laurel, Rubinstein elaborates: "I love deals. But I also believe in a balance between a deal and a movie, a deal and a television program. I believe that the product must perform at retail, in other words, that people have to walk out of the theater and say, 'I got my six bucks' worth.' That's where I expect my success to happen and the company's success to happen."

What makes Rubinstein so unusual is his understanding that in order to get that "product," he has to give filmmakers free artistic rein. "I don't see much sense in my second guessing people who are better directors than I am," he explains. "In fact, I think I am one of the few producers who does not want to be a director. There's always a judgment call mixed in with the creative process, and I think those judgments should be made by the creative people who are getting paid to make them. But it's not altruism on my part. I support the process because I think you get a better product by recognizing the talents of the people you're working with."

He also believes in making sure no one else interferes in that process. That's one of the reasons he prefers syndication to network programming. (There are no standards and practices.) And that's one of the reasons he took the unusual step of staying in New York, far from the wheeling and dealing of Hollywood: "I think the isolation works for us," he muses. "We tend not to go to a major company like Warner Brothers and say, 'Hey, can you guys put up the money?' We tend to piece it out; we try to control what we're doing."

Ironically, that same insistence on control made Rubinstein and Romero hesitate about their next venture—



**WAILS FROM THE DARKSIDE:** Child cowers before anti-claus in Michael McDowell's "Seasons of Belief" episode.

going back to television. Apart from their early stint with sports shows, he notes, "we had not done television extensively because we had not felt comfortable with the style most television people work in, which is a lot of cooks in the kitchen. For years, people said, 'Why don't you try something like *Twilight Zone* for television?' And they also said, in the same breath, 'Can you tone down your act enough to go on television?' So it wasn't until Jerry Golod went to LBS (*Darkside* is basically backed by Tribune Broadcasting and LBS Communications) when we were between features that we saw an opportunity to do what we wanted to do. We never gave them a script of anything. It was just based on our track record. The deal was not so dissimilar from what Spielberg got for *Amazing Stories*. They said, 'Okay, we're going to leave you alone because you know what you're doing in this area.' Well, we got a comparable commitment."

The show, *Tales from the Darkside*, was a turning point for Laurel, not only because it won nationwide attention and a contract that has now gone into a fourth year. It opened up a whole new venue for Laurel as a company that would no longer be tied solely to Romero's direction. Although he chose the first ten stories and gave the series its creative thrust, the pilot film was the first Laurel film that Romero did not direct. For its first

directors, Rubinstein turned to people who had worked in other capacities on Romero's films—people like Michael Gornick, director of photography on five Romero features, John Harrison, who appeared in *Dawn* and *Knight-riders* and wrote the score for *Creepshow* and *Day of the Dead*, and Tom Savini, who wrought the special effects for *Creepshow*, *Dawn*—and *Day of the Dead* and has since become one of the most sought-after SFX men in the business. Referring to this flow of talent, Rubinstein claims that "in a certain sense, that is why *Darkside* is working. For instance, Tom Savini brought his creation, Lizzie, to the set of 'Inside the Closet.' Well, we couldn't afford the going rate for a Lizzie, but Tom directed the sequence, so... And now, the same thing is happening with the pilot for our new series, *Moment of Fear*. We mix, match, barter, and trade to everyone's satisfaction."

"Now," he adds, "we hope to swing the pendulum back and have directors trained on *Darkside* direct features." And he is applying the same principle to writers as well. "There's a corner of Laurel that we would like to develop that helps novelists become screen writers. What we did for Stephen King (we were the producers of Steve's first theatrical screenplay, *Creepshow*, and his first produced teleplay, *Sorry, Right Number*—a forth season episode) we would like to do for David Morrell [author of the

novels that the Rambo films were based on] and Michael McDowell [the best-selling paperback novelist who's been sharpening his screen-writing teeth on *Darkside* for the last three years]. And we're doing it in New York," he says, "because we think that's the place to be for story ideas."

This, of course, points to a whole new area of development for Laurel and a radically new role for Romero. For one thing, Romero is no longer involved in the administration and management of the company, although he still holds the title of executive producer on *Darkside* and still sits on the board of directors. For another, he is now, in Rubinstein's words, "one of the suppliers, rather than the supplier" for Laurel, and he is free to make films for other producers. Rubinstein is quick to explain, "It's an arrangement that George and I worked out personally. He didn't really want to have corporate responsibility. He gets up thinking about other projects he wants to write and direct and appropriately

so. We came to a recognition of that and to a recognition that I wanted to build a company of a certain size with a multiplicity of projects. I got bored producing one person's work."

Perhaps even more important to the plans Rubinstein has for the company was the fact that "other people weren't coming to us because George loomed so large that they thought Laurel was a company set up to support George's creative efforts." But the producer emphasizes that they are by no means severing their relationship: Laurel is behind one Romero flick, the film version of Stephen King's *Pet Semetary*.

He also stresses, however, that these are only two of a dozen projects Laurel has in the works. In addition to pilots for three new television series, among them the Hitchcockian *Moment of Fear*, they include two new features—*Beauty Kills*, a mystery written by *Darkside* veteran Michael McDowell, and *The Sisterhood*, David Morrell's medical thriller based on

Michael Palmer's bestseller written in the vein of Robin Cook and Michael Crichton.

What's more, Rubinstein promises a few surprises from the new, expanded Laurel: "While we will stay with horror fantasy as a core, we have some broader interests that we're going to start to explore. For instance, we've started doing comedy. Someone recently said, 'Laurel, doing comedy?' And he even took it to an absurd extent and said, 'Rubinstein isn't funny.' But the point is, I think we have an approach and a respect and a *modus operandi* that can be applied to any genre." Then he adds, summing up both his own talent and his respect for others: "We're trying to take those things I think I did very successfully for George—in terms of the resources he needed to exercise his craft—and divide them among other people. What we're really interested in is people who have a passion for whatever they would like to do."

How can anyone knock that? ■



OUR GANG: Creepshow cronies (left to right) director George A. Romero, author (and actor) Stephen King, producer Richard Rubinstein, and (back row) effects designer Cletus Anderson.

# VIDEO

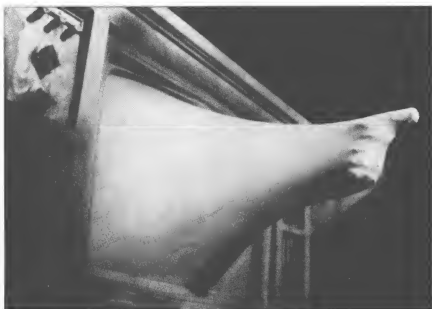
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## Romero's Children: How horror's most daring director influenced a generation of filmmakers.

*Assault on Precinct 13* (Media)  
*Halloween* (Media)  
*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Media)  
*Eaten Alive* (Prism)  
*Poltergeist* (MGM/UA)  
*Lifeforce* (Vestron)  
*They Came from Within* (Vestron)  
*Rabid* (Warner Video)  
*Scanners* (Embassy)  
*Videodrome* (MCA)  
*Last House on the Left* (Vestron)  
*The Hills Have Eyes* (Harmonyvision)  
*A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Media)  
*Freddy's Revenge* (Media)  
*Blood Feast* (Continental)  
*The Evil Dead* (Thorn EMI/HBO)

In an interview conducted for a recent video entitled *Scream Greats: Tom Savini, Master of Horror Effects* (Paramount), director George Romero said: "I think that anyone who works in the [horror] genre—anyone that's good—is in touch with his own fears." He was speaking in particular of Tom Savini, a long-time friend and co-worker who has done the special effects for most of Romero's films. But he was also speaking for himself and for a generation of younger directors—among them Tobe Hooper, John Carpenter, Wes Craven, and David Cronenberg—who have learned a great deal about their own fears, and ours, from the work of George Romero.

In my last column, I took a close look at Romero's *Zombie Trilogy* and called it "perhaps the most influential horror series of our time." I don't believe this in an overstatement. Romero's films are set in a world of irrational and senseless horror, a



**STRETCHING THE LIMITS:** Cronenberg's *Videodrome* points the way.

world in which our culture's most respected values are meaningless. This is a far cry from the world of the traditional horror film in which good always triumphs and humanity wins out over all odds. Through his fantasies, Romero has offered us a vision that is painfully real. The younger directors who have since come to dominate the horror genre were quick to respond to that vision. Fortunately, most of their films are available on videocassette, and students of horror can compare, contrast, and see exactly what these directors have learned from their master.

John Carpenter's *Assault on Precinct 13*, while not exactly a horror film, is a direct tribute to *Night of the Living Dead*. Here, a small group of people are trapped in an isolated police station by a huge gang of street thugs who attack in mindless, suicidal

waves without apparent reason. Of course, Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978) is a classic exercise in irrational, senseless horror. The killer (called simply "The Shape" in the credits) kills for no reason at all. Like Romero's zombies, he does not choose his victims consciously. He merely kills those who happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. And it seems that he himself is beyond death. In the course of the film, he is killed again and again only to rise every time. As a little boy explains: "You can't kill the bogeyman." The Shape is not a momentary crisis but, like Romero's zombies, an eternal force for whom our values mean nothing.

One of the first young directors to show Romero's influence was Tobe Hooper, whose *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) brings the worldview of *Night of the Living Dead* even closer

to home. A few teenagers are menaced and then killed one by one by a family of cannibals, again for no particular reason. As in Romero's trilogy and in *Halloween*, the victims do not die because of who they are or what they've done but simply because they accidentally stumble upon the killers. In many post-1968 horror films, personalities are not important. The good, the bad, the ugly, and the beautiful are only so much meat, and sur-



DEATH BED: Carpenter's *Halloween*.

vival is a matter of luck, nothing more.

*Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is especially terrifying because there is no element of the supernatural involved. What happens is unlikely but possible, even in our rational, everyday world. In fact, the film is loosely based on the real case of Ed Gein, the Wisconsin cannibal, grave robber, and necrophile who also inspired Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*.

Hooper also knows that the everyday façade of our world can crumble in a moment for no reason at all. In the opening sequence of the film, while the teenagers' van passes through the Texas countryside, the radio provides a background of meaningless, day-to-day horrors—cholera outbreaks, collapsing buildings, et cetera. What happens to the teens later on is only one more irrational event in a world that is full of them.

At one point in the film, during a discussion of astrology (which, like science and philosophy, is a way of imposing order on reality), Sally the heroine says: "Everything means something, I guess." Unfortunately, she is wrong. Many of the most terrifying events in our world mean absolutely nothing at all.

Hooper's next film, *Eaten Alive*

(1976) is not as well known as *Chain-saw*, but it generates the same dark, almost monotonous sense of horror. Here, an old man named Judd, played masterfully by Neville Brand, runs a back-country hotel where he regularly murders his guests and feeds them to an alligator he keeps in a pen behind the porch. The debt to *Psycho* is obvious, but, while Norman Bates was the exception, Judd is the rule. In the world of *Eaten Alive*, everyone is psychotic, irrational, and cruel. Husbands and wives, fathers and daughters, lovers, all the characters purposefully torment each other. Like Romero's families, Hooper's loved ones eat each other alive. Judd is not really out of place here. He only pushes things a bit farther than his neighbors and guests.

In more recent films like *Poltergeist* (1982) and *Lifeforce* (1985) Hooper has become enamored of high-tech special effects—flashing lights and wind machines—but the Romero influence is still present. The swimming pool scene in *Poltergeist* and the final sequence of *Lifeforce* in which London is ravaged by hordes of vampires are tributes to Romero, as is the music video that Hooper directed for Billy Idol's "Dancing with Myself." The director's recent return to his origins in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre II* proves that he has not lost touch with his roots.

Canadian director David Cronenberg understood early on that Romero's films play on a basic fear—the fear of disease. Disease puts us out of control. It attacks our bodies, our minds, our lives. It passes from person to person, and it does so invisibly, for no apparent reason.

Widespread disease in the form of a plague is one of mankind's oldest fears. In Romero's trilogy, the world is suffering from such a plague, a plague of living death, and many of Romero's characters are more frightened of becoming zombies than they are of the zombies themselves. Working with this same idea, Cronenberg made *They Came From Within* (1975) a film about a plague of man-made parasites. Later, in *Rabid*, *Scanners*, and *Video-drome*, Cronenberg continued to explore the possibilities of man-made diseases that could be transmitted to unwary and unwilling victims. The world of Cronenberg's films is utterly senseless, utterly irrational, and yet it is frighteningly similar to our world.

Director Wes Craven's first film, *Last House on the Left* (1972) was a crude and grim exercise in senseless violence and revenge, but it estab-

lished one of his central concerns—that normal people must sometimes commit inhuman acts in order to survive. Again, this is a Romero theme. As in the zombie films, the living must suspend their values and massacre the dead to keep from becoming like them.

Craven's best film on this theme is *The Hills Have Eyes* (1978) in which a family of tourists are trapped, tormented, and murdered by a family of cannibals living in a desert in the southwest. In this paradoxical, no-win situation, the tourists are forced to become like the irrational monsters they are trying to defeat. Craven's sense of the irrational is particularly strong in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) and its sequel *Freddy's Revenge* (1986), both of which continually blur the distinction between the tenuous everyday world and the more powerful, irrational world of dreams which, it seems, is where we normal people really live.

George Romero did not invent the "splatter film"—Herschell Gordon Lewis's *Blood Feast* (1963) has that dubious distinction—but, for better or worse, he has made splatter fashionable, and he continues to do it with exuberance and a sense of humor. Carpenter, Cronenberg, Craven, and Hooper also make splatter films that are like roller coaster rides, and it is this sense of excitement and—dare I use the word?—joy that sets their work apart from the grim and sadistic violence of the run-of-the-mill mad slasher flicks.

At least two other younger directors are worth mentioning in this regard. Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead* (1983) is an excellent if gruesome parody of Romero's splatter techniques, and in *Return of the Living Dead* (1984) director Dan O'Bannon—who co-scripted *Lifeforce* and *Dead and Buried* (1981)—offers the same mix of horror and humor that Romero achieved in *Dawn of the Dead* (1979) and *Creepshow* (1982, Warner).

Romero has also brought to his films a profound sense of the roots of the genre in comic books, pulp magazines, and early B movies, and younger directors have followed suit. Carpenter's remake of *The Thing* (1982, MCA), Hooper's recent version of *Invaders from Mars*, and Cronenberg's new remake of *The Fly* all show that these directors are coming to see themselves as part of horror history—a history that continues to be revised, expanded and enlightened by the work of George Romero. ■





# HOLLYWOOD GRAPEVINE

## Information and speculation on fantastic film and television.

*Superman IV* now has a firm July 17 release date from Cannon. Directed by Sidney J. Fury (*Iron Eagle*), the film features not only Christopher Reeve as the bashful Boy of Steel and Gene Hackman as Lex Luthor, but also Margo Kidder reprising her role as the effable Lois Lane.

Strange rumors are circulating around post-production work on *The Witches of Eastwick*, based on John Updike's upscale literary novel about a trio of bitchy ladies who wreak magical havoc on a small Rhode Island seaport. Apparently Cher, who co-stars with Jack Nicholson, Michele Pfeiffer and Susan Sarandon in the film, decided she wanted a bigger part. Agents and producers warred until the script was re-written to her satisfaction. There are now only two witches, say sources close to the film, with Sarandon switched to another role, and the ending reshoot to create a more "moral" tone. The Warner film is now scheduled for release at the end of July.

*Robocop* is a film with a story as dumb as its title would lead you to believe. However, much to everyone's surprise, the script is actually good, sharply written with vivid action. If the filmmakers can pull it off, it might even be worth watching.

Executive Producer for the film is John Davidson, producer of *Airplane* and *Top Secret*. It was directed by Paul Verhoeven (*Flesh and Blood*, *Spetters*) and stars "scream queen" Nancy Allen (*Carrie*) and Peter Weller, star of *Buckaroo Banzai*. Orion Pictures currently has it sched-



RAIDERS III, STAR WARS O: *Indy's back, but not Darth Vader.*

uled for early July.

Another Orion film, *Cherry 2000*, has been announced and postponed several times since it was initially scheduled as a summer '86 release. A post-apocalyptic yarn in the *Mad Max* mold, it is the tale of a rugged loner attempting to find spare parts for a mogul's robotic sex-toy. At last report, the film had gone back for re-editing, and will probably be slotted to follow whichever summer release fails first at the box office.

In January, Disneyland unveiled its newest attraction, *Star Tours*, produced and designed by George Lucas in cooperation with Disney's *WED Imagineers*. *Star Tours* is, essentially, the old "Mission to Mars" attraction done right—adapting an airplane simulator to hold forty people for a three-minute wild-and-wooly ride through an Industrial Light and Magic-produced outer space setting.

Opening week saw the line reaching from Tomorrowland back to Main Street. For now "Star Tours" will only be at Disneyland. But since it seems well on its way to being the park's most popular attraction, we should see its appearance at the other parks in a year or two.

But George Lucas is not confining himself to theme park rides, despite the rather poor results of his two most recent film efforts—*Labyrinth* and *Howard the Duck*. He's at work developing *Raiders III*, although that almost certainly won't be the title.

One thing that almost certainly won't be happening soon is an additional film in that galaxy far, far away. While he was completing post-production on *The Empire Strikes Back* in 1980, Lucas was already planning to end the series with *Return of the Jedi*. He had already burned out on the time- and energy-draining pro-

ject...Despite a need for capital, Lucas is unwilling to commit the three or four years another *Star Wars* film would require.

However, don't be surprised if the next film from George Lucas—whatever it might be—is released by Walt Disney Studios as a Touchstone film. There has been a relationship between Lucas and the Disney people for some time, and the studio is now headed by Michael Eisner, the former head of Paramount Pictures. Eisner and Paramount courted Lucas and brought him into their fold with a remarkably favorable deal on *Raiders of the Lost Ark* when other studios were leery of the project. Now, with Eisner and Disney together, can George be far behind?

Renegade animator Don Bluth's production company Sullivan Studios has relocated to Ireland, partly to take advantage of liberal tax laws and low-cost labor. Bluth began working with the Irish government to set up an animation shop for *An American Tail*, training a number of Irish artists in entry-level jobs. The new film, *The Land Before Time Began*, has both Steven Spielberg and George Lucas as executive producers, and is scheduled for distribution by Universal in summer, 1988.

Bluth is also attempting to set up a television division, if he can convince network executives to up their budgets to five hundred thousand dollars or more per half-hour episode. I wouldn't hold my breath.

The television syndication market is oversupplied, according to insiders at the National Association of Television Programming Executives conference held in Las Vegas in January. Local stations feel they've been paying too much, and realizing less profit than they'd been promised, particularly on animation series. It's now a buyer's market, and independent stations are frequently saying no. One positive trend is that stations are snapping up new half-hour live-action adventure series. Two winners were remakes of classic series: *Sea Hunt* and *Rat Patrol*. While no genre series are currently in production, the shift from animation to live-action could bode well for new science fiction or fantasy adventure series, especially if they can be produced on a tight budget.

Television is going to be going through other traumatic changes in the near and relatively near future. The

most dramatic change will be the advent of the People Meter. This is a new technology being added to the world of Nielsen and Arbitron ratings. With this new device-driven system, ratings will be vastly more accurate than the old combination recorder and diary system which was often distorted by the head of the household's preferences.

The networks, local stations, and advertising agencies will know not only what is being watched, but who is watching. These People Meters will provide information on the age and sex of the viewers, so demographics



**COP OUT:** Buckaroo Banzai star Peter Weller heads Robocop cast.

will become much more available and much more important to the decision making process. Shows skewed older—news, game shows, *Green Acres* reruns—might have some trouble finding advertisers interested in buying time. Younger skewed shows like *St. Elsewhere* or *Star Trek*—both the old and new versions—will find themselves more in demand, even though the gross ratings might be too low to justify leaving them on the air.

Recently ABC terminated its contract with Nielsen, reportedly in favor of a British People Meter firm.

In the meantime, ABC, CBS, and NBC are all tightening their belts. Staffs are being cut back, budgets are being reduced, and everyone is crying poor. One network executive even gave a statement to the trade press that it's possible that the number three network (whoever ends up in that position next season) could actually lose money this year.

I'm not quite willing to believe that being a network isn't a license to print money, but it is a signal that there won't be any big budget shows on the horizon. Don't look for any

new television science fiction series unless they're cheap to produce.

The only ones that even come close to being "real science fiction" are *Outlaws* and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. Each only required a brief visit to the world of special effects, and thereby a low expenditure, to establish the science fictional premise of the show. From there on, they're just two more detective shows with slightly different gimmicks.

ABC does have one real science fiction series on the boards for airing starting in late March. Lorimar-Telepictures has now produced six one-hour episodes of its *Max Headroom* series. These episodes won't be like the *Max Headroom* pseudo-talk show seen on cable with a computerized actor as host. Instead, these will be dramatic hours based on the British hour-long mini-movie giving the dramatic, future-set origin of our hero, *Max Headroom*. That original is being rewritten and re-shot as the first hour of the new series. Both the first and second episodes are being written by Steve Roberts, the scriptwriter on the original British version. Science fiction authors who are writing for the series include George R.R. Martin and Michael Cassutt.

One final word—1986 saw the second highest annual gross domestic box office ever, with an income of 3.8 billion dollars based on sales of approximately 1.03 billion tickets. The average studio film cost about twelve million dollars to produce. With approximately one hundred fifty pictures out there, that's an average return on the order of 25.3 million dollars per picture. I don't think the studios are hurting too badly.

And to anyone who tells you that cable and home video will drive movies out of business, spit in their eye. One billion tickets, give or take, has been the average annual take for the last twenty-five years. Before the arrival of cable. After the arrival of cable. Before the explosion of home video. After home video explosion. One billion tickets a year. Every year. And it looks likely to stay that way.

People like to go out. Especially people in their teens, twenties, and thirties. The main change has been in the types of movies made—some people you need to drag out of the house, and for that you need *spectacle*. Fewer small, intimate movies. More grand-scale films. But people will keep going to movies for a long time to come. ■

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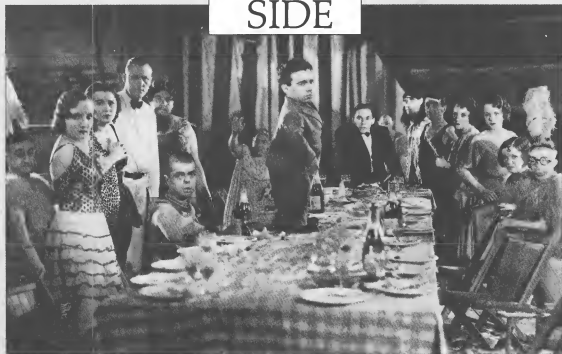
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# THE OTHER SIDE



MGM/UA HOME VIDEO

## M HORRIBLE TWISTED THINGS CRAWLING

More than fifty years before the acclaim for David Cronenberg's *The Fly*, and David Lynch's *The Elephant Man*, the classic cinematic combination of horror and biological tragedy had already been filmed—Tod Browning's macabre classic, *Freaks*. Powerful and disturbing even in today's era of high-tech make-up and SFX, at the time of its release, *Freaks* was condemned, censored and suppressed; its director's career was essentially destroyed. But in the 1970's, rare prints of the movie began to surface at colleges and museums, and grew into cult film. Late last year, MGM finally released *Freaks* for the home video market, and critics Gene Siskel and Roger Elbert promptly hailed the movie as a classic, a must-own item for film lovers.

Adapted from a pulp melodrama, there was nothing controversial in the plot for *Freaks*: in a one-ring circus travelling through turn-of-the-century France, trapeze artist Cleopatra learns that Hans, one of the sideshow midgets, has inherited a fortune; she seduces, marries and poisons Hans for his money; the other sideshow freaks uncover the scheme and avenge Hans by trapping and mutilating Cleopatra and her strongman accomplice, Hercules.

However, the scandal began when Browning cast, as the sideshow acts... genuine sideshow acts. Midgets, dwarves, microcephalics ("pinheads"), Siamese twins, hermaphrodites, and extreme birth defect adults—all actual circus and carnival performers—fill sixteen of the movie's twenty-four roles. But Browning's truly *avant garde* outrage was his decision to not exploit his cast. Instead, (like Cronenberg and Lynch) he exploited the audience; jarring and challenging the viewer's perceptions in nearly every scene, constantly forcing the unspoken question, "who are the real freaks?"

The first half of the movie, set to an ebullient carnival score, is nearly documentary; in vignettes of circus

life, Browning shows that the physically challenged actors are just people, with dreams and emotions like anyone's. Viewer disgust turns to empathy, and amazement in the sheer elasticity of the human form; the tenacity of the human spirit, particularly given that some of the cast are so severely deformed as to make one wonder that they can live at all: Randian, a limbless flesh tube with a head, calmly rolls and lights his own cigarettes; Johnny Eck, a handsome man whose body simply—ends—below his ribcage, agilely and gracefully climbs around on his hands. Meanwhile, the camera angles keep lowering over closer to the freaks' point-of-view, strengthening audience identification until the normal actors loom, grotesquely large, from the frame.

Then the carnival score is gone, all music—but for a single pan-pipe—absent from the film's second half. The story darkens, and shadows grow longer. As the sideshow performers spy on Cleopatra and Hercules, their handicaps become advantages, strange powers: they can hide, climb, lurk unseen in places no one else can. Suddenly the freaks attack, in darkness and rain, bearing oversized knives and guns; no longer cute nor pathetic, they scuttle across the screen like spiders and the viewer's shallow liberal sympathies shatter before an onslaught of nightmare creatures who suddenly seem utterly unhuman.

It was all too much for the public—the film was attacked, denounced, even banned in England—and for MGM, which rapidly pulled *Freaks* from distribution.

Now, years too late, Browning has won some measure of vindication. *Freaks* retains a unique, unsettling power that modern filmmakers have yet to duplicate... because the actors in *Freaks* couldn't take off their make-up or re-attach their limbs when the camera stopped.

—Mark Arnold

Twilight Zone 99

# THE OTHER SIDE



## THINGS WITHOUT FACES

Long before it became "hip to be square," the Residents were proudly trapezoidal. For a good fifteen years, this industrious, music-producing entity of indeterminate identity has resolutely trod that most untrod of paths—the dizzyingly cliff-hugging trail of solitary, aggressive weirdness—and emerged from the woods not only alive, but still measurably warped. Quite an achievement in these times of diminishing artistic expectations, eh?

Through San Francisco's tiny Ralph Records, the Residents have released about twenty LPs, a fistful of singles and EPs, a couple of video cassettes, and enough associated cult-pleasing merchandize (like t-shirts, sponges, forehead thermometers, moist towelettes, etc.) to choke a mole. And recently a best-of sampling has been digitized onto CD (*Heaven? and Hell!*) by Rykodisc of Boston.

Mask is the key here. Without faces to draw attention to their true identities, they're free from the traps of ego and celebrity, and able to more fully explore the realm of pure image. Also, as non-

entities they're more inclined to dig for inspiration into the darker regions of their subconscious—in effect, their privacy is assured no matter how self-revelatory the work is. And that privacy has helped preserve their naivete, which has kept Residents' music in a state of frozen childlike innocence, projecting shadowed images from dreams, fantasy, and reality onto a musical screen devoid of sophistication or slick technique. It's a perplexing mix; to most, opaquely uninviting and cryptically unlistenable. But for those with the key, the rewards are rich.

Recommended records include the most recent, *Stars and Hank Forever*, the second volume in their ongoing (until the turn of the century, they promise) "American Composers Series" which scrambles the music of past and present masters (John Philip Sousa and Hank Williams this time, George Gershwin and James Brown last time, and Bob Dylan and Sun Ra next time); and their as-yet uncompleted epic "Mole" trilogy, *Mark of the Mole*, *Tunes of Two Cities*, *The Big Bubble* and live *Moleshow* (yeah, I know that's more than

three ... don't ask).

For info, write Ralph Records, 109 Minna Street, #391, San Francisco, CA, 94105.

—Lou Stathis

## GORE- GONZOLA

Pity the gorehound.

What's a hard-core horror hunter to do, confronting the splurging cornucopias of grade-Z splatterfests in America's video shops? How to know if *Neon Maniacs* is a treat for the jaded, or if *School Girl Screamer*s should be boycotted at all costs?

They might be advised to turn to *Gore Gazette*, a self-proclaimed "guide to horror, exploitation and sleaze" edited and published by Rick Sullivan, who bodes fair to become the Vincent Canby of cannibal flicks, the Rex Reed of Retch. Now in its eighth year, the *Gazette* (or G.G.) is a monthly mimeo broadside, four pages of densely packed reviews on big- and low-budget sf, horror, slasher, martial arts, women's prison and revenge films, cheese and

sleaze, all at the bargain price of sixty cents a copy. Although hardly the only amateur devoted to the genre, Sullivan is unusually diligent about deadlines and mailings, and G.G. eschews philosophical raving and indulgent ratings-charts to focus on the six to eight films considered each month, reviewed with a professionalism that has attracted the notice of such publications as *Film Comment* and *People*.

A radical activist of the chunk blowers, Sullivan ran a three-year long festival of weekly gore screenings at a now-defunct New York club, with live appearances by such lowlife luminaries as Ilsa (She-Wolf of the SS). Sullivan also markets, through G.G., an international catalog of posters and rare, even unreleased, films-on-video (featuring such esoterica as *I Hate Your Guts*, *Last Orgy of the Third Reich*, *Murder-rock*, *Mad Dr. of Blood Isle*, and the uncut print to *Carnival of Souls*). Sporadically available at specialty bookstores, annual subscriptions are \$13.00 from *Gore Gazette*, 73 N. Fullerton Ave., Montclair, NJ, 07042.

—Mark Arnold



PHOTO FROM BLOOD RAGE. PRISM ENTERTAINMENT

# THE OTHER SIDE



## CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT

Late last year, Jon J. Muth a twenty-six-year-old Cincinnati artist, released a graphic novel, *Dracula: A Symphony in Moonlight and Nightmares* through the Marvel Comics Group. Twenty-sixth in Marvel's series of deluxe comics packages, *Dracula* stands apart from the rest as a work which draws from the lost potential of the fifties horror comics, the German expressionist films of the early 1900s, and the romantic art mode of the 19th century.

Behind a cover painting of a huge brown vampire bat surrounding a woman wrapped in white are eighty pages of sensual, shocking watercolors. Their wispy, frothy feeling is shattered every so often by a piercing, haunting facial study. It is indeed a symphony, each color, each character each phrase stepping forward in turn to dance in the spotlight to the almost audible music seeping in from just outside our view.

Muth adapted Bram

Stoker's classic tale over three years while working with writer J. Marc DeMatteis on Epic Comics' twelve-issue *Moonshadow*, a series reviewed favorably by the *New York Daily News* which counts among its fans Ray Bradbury and Kurt Vonnegut.

"I came to New York in 1981 wanting to be a comic book artist," said Muth from the huge upstate New York studio (2000 plus sq. ft.) he shares with fellow illustrators Jeffrey Jones and Kent Williams. "I met Jeff at a convention and was blown away by his work. I turned around, went back to Cincinnati and literally threw away everything that I had done before."

The graphic novel is dedicated to Jones, co-winner of last year's World Fantasy Award for illustration. "The medium of combining words and pictures is quite a new one," says Jones. "I feel Jon has done something new and different with it and has added a new dimension to the medium. He held the whole package together

very nicely and I'm quite impressed with the end product." Muth and Jones shared a show in Texas that is scheduled to travel to California and several other states in the next few months.

—Robert Simpson

## DARK KNIGHT

Pity the poor Batman. Debased from somber vigilante to Pop-Art buffoon by '60s television, he's now fallen into the hands of artist/writer/revisionist Frank Miller. *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, a four-issue DC Comics series created with the assistance of Klaus Janson and colorist

Batman's motivating lust/loathing for revenge is trenchant, as is his paralleling of the vigilante and criminal impulses (they are not opposites, they're complements). Unfortunately, his apprehension of criminality isn't nearly as sharp: extravagantly melodramatic psycho- and sociopaths abound, as do mealy-mouthed liberals, who, as any good reactionary knows, only fan the flames of lawlessness with cowardly inaction. Thus, *Dark Knight* becomes not only a discourse on vigilantism, but also a panderer to the uncontrolled fears and base instincts that lie at its source.

Miller's approach is less equivocal in his



Lynn Varley is now available in one volume as a Warner Books paperback. It's filled with a characterizational depth and moral complexity befitting these post-Goetzian times, but it ends up engorged with unresolvable contradictions. Juxtaposing ugly urban reality with stacked-deck never-neverland, the book portrays a troubled, fifty-year-old Bruce Wayne emerging from a decade-long retirement to clean up an increasingly crime-soiled Gotham City. Miller's insight into the

script for the "Year One" series currently running in the regular *Batman* comic. David Mazzucchelli's boldly simple, heavy-lined artwork sets the tone for this repositioning of the Batman's origin into the present; it's classic, uncluttered graphic storytelling. Miller's trimmed the overwrought emotionalism that marred the *Dark Knight* and is energetically reinventing bat-mythology with a refreshing, baggage-free vigor. Maybe there's hope for the old crime-nemesis yet.

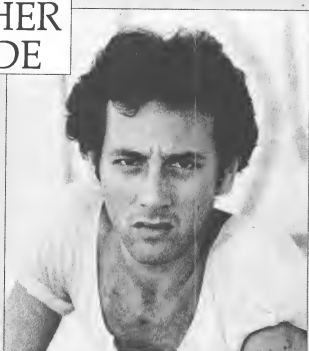
—Lou Stathis

# THE OTHER SIDE

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PEE-WEE: The return of zaniness?



REUBENS: Eclipsed by his creation?

## SURREALISTIC WONKINESS

It may be reading too much into things, but changes in the social and political climate seem to be signalled first in comedy. Consider: Just as the McCarthy era was ending, America was hit with a new wave of zaniness—*Mad* magazine, *Your Show of Shows*, Spike Jones, Ernie Kovacs. It even spilled over into children's programming. Performers like Pinky Lee, Sandy Becker and Soupy Sales radiated a kind of surrealistic wonkiness that warped an entire generation.

If the premise is true, what then can we make of Pee-wee Herman?

In the past few years, Pee-wee has had a major hit film, *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, been a guest vocalist on Cyndi Lauper's new album, *True Colors*, and is now the host of a startling Saturday morning program called *Pee-wee's Playhouse*. Since the show's premiere last year it has been heralded as "about the best thing on TV" by *New York's Village Voice*, written up by *Time* Magazine as a perfect example of the 80's postmodern sensibility ("playful with a vengeance," said *Time's* Kurt Andersen). Pee-wee's dominion over his little world was compared to that of Caligula by the *New York Daily News*. And none of this really comes close to describing even half of what's going on in the show.

Each week Pee-wee visits the Playhouse, a magical place atop which sits a giant winking sand sphinx. The house is filled with the stuff of imagination run wild, such as Chairry the Talking Chair, jive-talking jazz musician versions of the old Top Cat cats, a robot and a talking genie head in a box. His neighbors who drop by every so often are no less peculiar: a cowboy, a sailor, an incredibly obese noisy neighbor and a beautiful someone whose sole purpose seems to be to pout and pamper herself. Made of the slickest mercury, the *Playhouse* universe is always bending, twisting, breaking up and reforming into new and unexpected shapes.

Costing several hundred thousand dollars to produce every week, the program is designed by underground car-

toonist Gary Panter (creator of such strips as *Jimbo*, an innovative comic book packaged with a corrugated cardboard cover), Wayne White, Ric Heitzman, and a legion of stop-motion, full cel and clay animators, writers and cameramen. The cameramen should be given awards just for keeping up with Herman, who at times flies across the set at terrific speeds, bouncing off walls.

The brainchild of improvisational comic Paul Reubens, Pee-wee Herman is the quintessential fifties nerd turned New Wave space case. But Pee-wee is more than a Reubens character. He's a fully-developed alter ego who's been taking over more and more of Reubens's daily life. It seems to be working. Reubens (or perhaps Pee-wee) is being called by his contemporaries "one of the most powerful men in show business."

The future looks bright for Pee-wee. He has plans to release an album of his own soon and also a videotape. His movie is one of the biggest home rental hits in years. But there is a downside to this: just as we were about to go to press, a lawsuit for \$3.9 million was filed against Reubens by a New York-based production company, Broadway Arts, who claim they are owed back pay for work on the show.

With the rising popularity of the manic, childlike comedy that fills Pee-wee's world and that of performers like Bob Goldwaith and Emo Philips, a resurgence of zaniness seems to be taking place. It is a sure bet a program like *Pee-wee's Playhouse* couldn't have existed five years ago on Saturday morning, much less be thought of as prime-time material. The *Playhouse* is a return of sorts to a simpler time. For a long time the message being fed kids was to be calm and pacificist at all times, not to be violent or hurt each other. Herman, while not calling for total anarchy, is saying that it is all right to be a little louder than your parents might want you to be, or to jump up and down if that's what you feel. It's as much a message for the kids in us adults as it is for the kids.

—Robert Simpson



# COMING UP



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